

Islam and Other Faiths

ISMAIL RAJI AL-FARUQI

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Foreword

*There was a time in my life . . . when all I cared about was proving to myself that I could win my physical and intellectual existence from the West. But, when I won it, it became meaningless. I asked myself: Who am I? A Palestinian, a philosopher, a liberal humanist? My answer was: I am a Muslim!**

On 27 May 1986, the Muslim World and the academic community lost one of its most energetic, engaging, and active colleagues – Ismail Raji al-Faruqi. Publication of *Islam and Other Faiths* is a fitting occasion to remember and celebrate a Muslim trailblazer of the twentieth century.

In recent decades, the world of Islam has had a number of prominent intellectuals who, combining the best education in Western universities with their Islamic heritage, have attempted both to explain Islam to non-Muslim audiences and to contribute to the contemporary interpretation and understanding of Islam among Muslims. The growing Muslim communities in Europe and America has made the task that much more important. Ismail al-Faruqi was indeed a pioneer, one of a select few who blazed the trail for current and future generations.

For al-Faruqi, Islam was an all-encompassing ideology, the primary identity of a world-wide community of believers and the guiding principle for society and culture. This approach, this wholistic Islamic world-view, was embodied in a life and career in which he wrote extensively, lectured and consulted

* M. Tariq Quraishi, *Ismail al-Faruqi: An Enduring Legacy* (Plainfield, Indiana: The Muslim Students Association, 1987), p. 9.

with Islamic movements and national governments, and organized Muslims in both America and internationally.

Al-Faruqi, who saw the world through the prism of his Islamic faith and commitment, focused on issues of identity, history, belief, culture, social mores, and international relations. Whatever the national and cultural differences across the Muslim World, his analysis of the strengths and weaknesses (past, present, and future) of Muslim societies began with Islam – its presence in society and its necessary role in development, issues of identity, authenticity, acculturation, Western political and cultural imperialism, inter-religious understanding and dialogue – all were continuous themes in his writing.

Al-Faruqi effectively bridged the two worlds of Islam and the West. After completing graduate degrees in Western philosophy, he left America for Cairo where, from 1954 to 1958, he immersed himself in the study of Islam at al-Azhar University. Returning to North America, he became Visiting Professor of Islamic Studies at the Institute of Islamic Studies and a Fellow at the Faculty of Divinity, McGill University from 1959 to 1961 where he studied Christianity and Judaism. He began his professional career as Professor of Islamic Studies at the Central Institute for Islamic Research in Karachi, 1961–63, followed by a year as Visiting Professor of History of Religions at the University of Chicago (1964). He joined the faculty of Syracuse University and in 1968 became Professor of Islamic Studies and of History of Religions at Temple University, a post he retained until his death in 1986.

During a professional life that spanned almost thirty years, Ismail al-Faruqi authored, edited, or translated 25 books, published more than 100 articles, was a visiting professor at more than 23 universities in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and served on the editorial boards of seven major journals. As he worked to establish Islamic Studies programmes, recruit and train Muslim students, and organize Muslim professionals, he also established and chaired the Islamic Studies Steering Committee of the American Academy of Religion, a presence that has continued throughout the years.

A significant portion of Ismail al-Faruqi's life was spent in tireless efforts both nationally and internationally for better understanding between Christians and Muslims. He did this through his scholarship and participation in ecumenical dialogue. His experience at McGill University's Institute of Islamic Studies resulted in a major work, *Christian Ethics*. A Muslim study of Christianity, it was an ambitious two-year project during which he read widely in the history of Christian thought and Christian theology and had the opportunity to enter into extended conversation and debate with colleagues such as Wilfred Cantwell Smith, then Director of the Institute, Charles Adams, and Stanley Brice Frost, then Dean of the Faculty of Divinity. *Christian Ethics* was a ground-breaking exercise – a modern-trained Muslim's analysis of Christianity. Al-Faruqi combined an impressive breadth of scholarship with tireless energy, voracious intellect, and linguistic skills. While some might take issue with his interpretation and conclusions, he could not be faulted for not doing his homework nor for his candour.

From the publication of *Christian Ethics* in 1967 until his death, he was a major force in Islam's dialogue with other world religions. As the collection of articles in *Islam and Other Faiths* demonstrates, al-Faruqi's interest and involvement in inter-religious dialogue was to continue throughout the rest of his life. Ismail al-Faruqi was a major voice and serious participant in the emerging fields of comparative religions and ecumenism. Here was a scholar who demonstrated his knowledge of the scriptures and scholarly tradition of the 'other'. As he travelled around the world in his capacity as an Islamic scholar-activist, he was also an active participant in international ecumenical meetings. As a leading Muslim spokesperson for Islam, al-Faruqi became one of a handful of Muslim scholars known and respected in both Western academic and ecumenical circles. His writings, speeches, participation and leadership role in inter-religious meetings and organizations sponsored by the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches, the Vatican, and the Inter-Religious Peace Colloquium of which he was Vice-President from 1977 to 1982, made him the most

visible and prolific Muslim contributor to the dialogue of world religions. In his writings, he set out the principles and bases for Muslim participation in inter-religious dialogue and social action. As in many other areas, al-Faruqi served as an example to other Muslim scholars of the importance of studying other faiths seriously. This belief was institutionalized at Temple University where al-Faruqi insisted that Muslim students seriously study other faiths and write dissertations in comparative religions.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the relationship of Islam to other faiths has never been more important. Globalization and the significant presence and force of Islam in the Muslim World and the West make civilizational dialogue an imperative. Ismail al-Faruqi provides a model to be emulated. While some might disagree at times with his analysis and conclusions, al-Faruqi was a scholar who earned his right to participate in an inter-civilizational dialogue. He knew the sources of Western culture and thought and could debate and discuss them on an equal footing with all.

Ismail al-Faruqi was a tireless scholar-activist, working on all fronts, domestically and internationally. As his former student and first Ph.D., I had the privilege to study with him and to know both Ismail and Lamiya al-Faruqi personally as well as professionally. He took a reluctant graduate student and by the force of his personality and academic skills, he made Islam 'come alive' as a faith and civilization at a time when there was little interest in Islam or the study of Islam in American universities. He was in turn, creative, imaginative, challenging, provocative, charming and, yes, committed. Islam and the teaching of Islam embodied his faith, profession, and vocation. In the end, however difficult it is to summarize or evaluate his life, one can safely say that given his belief that a Muslim was one whose submission is a life-long struggle to realize or actualize God's Will, Ismail al-Faruqi was indeed a *mujāhid*.

Washington, DC
23 February 1998

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Introduction

Ismail Raji al-Faruqi came into an intellectual world of his own; shackled by circumstances, he fought to prove his ideas right. He followed the view that not to say things clearly is not to say them at all. Equipped with an academic training, he sought to prove or disprove those issues which had a bearing upon his time, especially those with regard to religious thought. Islam played a crucial role in al-Faruqi's life, and especially in later life. He looked at things from an Islamic perspective. This factor was recognized by others, and in response to a letter from Professor H.A.R. Gibb, he wrote: 'I take your word that you believe I am "genuinely concerned for Islam as a way of life" and consider your criticism as designed to promote – and wherever necessary to correct and redress this genuine concern.' This genuine concern was a motivating factor throughout al-Faruqi's life and, thus, an overwhelming concern of his academic mission.

Al-Faruqi was born in Jaffa, Palestine, on 1 January 1921. His father, Abd al-Huda al-Faruqi, was both a judge and a well-known figure in Palestine. Al-Faruqi, thus, grew up in a prosperous and scholarly family with his education and family background giving him the confidence to play a prominent role in his country. After graduating from the American University of Beirut in 1941, he returned home and eventually became the District Governor of Galilee in the Government of Palestine. In 1948, however, the partition of Palestine made him and his family refugees. This experience no doubt left a deep scar on him, and probably influenced the future direction of his thought. Subsequent writings reflect this tension for he never lost his attachment to Palestine, the land or the people and, therefore,

to its history and culture. Al-Faruqi left Palestine for the United States. There he obtained two Masters degrees in Philosophy from Indiana and Harvard Universities respectively, and completed his Ph.D. 'On Justifying the Good: Metaphysics and Epistemology of Value' in 1952. In his search for the classical Islamic heritage, he studied at Al-Azhar from 1954 to 1958. A year later, at the invitation of Professor Cantwell Smith, he joined the Faculty of Divinity at McGill University, Montreal, where he studied Judaism and Christianity.

In the course of what follows, we will highlight some of al-Faruqi's perceptions and approaches to the understanding of other faiths, though it will not be possible to provide a comprehensive coverage. We will begin where al-Faruqi began his exploration of pre-Abrahamic faith in the region, namely, the religions of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations. Al-Faruqi discusses the region and its people extensively in his writings as a backdrop to the study of Judaism and Christianity, which played a crucial role in redefining the cultural and social norms of behaviour, and where the advent of Islam succeeded them all. His attention was focused on the region; first, because of the geographic, ethnic and linguistic community of the Near East. What is perhaps unique in al-Faruqi's assessment of the region is that he saw the history of it as interconnected, a kind of eternal history, traversed in time and religious culture. Second, this culture and its history reveals itself like the leaves of a book, and its connection with the Arabian Peninsula unfolds the eternal moral and spiritual impact as untouched by the Persian elements of Mesopotamian beliefs, particularly their eschatological and Messianic beliefs. The Arabs rejected those beliefs, and this, al-Faruqi argues, is the reason why Abraham, whom he calls 'the Mesopotamian Anonion from Ur',² finds spiritual connections and solace amongst them. Abraham's beliefs and practices not only connect him spiritually in monotheistic roots but are also the very reason why he was forced to leave his country. It was his beliefs that made him, both physically and socially, an outcast in his own community. He was a persecuted man in Ur, the capital of Mesopotamia in 26-24 BC, a city which he left in order to pursue his faith. The obvious

direction which he could take from there was to the Arabian Peninsula, which he did with Hagar.

The Mesopotamians used various names for their divinities. Some evolved from cosmic features such as their deities for heaven, the winds, the foothills and fresh waters, and another, perhaps, secondary list provided appellations for the moon, the sun, and stars. An or Anum was the god of the heavens and the father of other gods. Rain was seen as his semen, which impregnated the earth and produced vegetation. Enlil was the god of the winds and storms, whilst Eaki was the god of underground fresh water. But above all, Marduk, the city god of Babylon, claimed supremacy; he was appointed a kind of permanent king of the gods. Al-Faruqi's analysis is interesting. In his description of the salient characteristics of the religious culture of these Near Eastern peoples and his conception of their relations with God, he argues that they saw themselves as servants of a transcendent deity. Furthermore, although the Mesopotamians had various deities, these too were regarded as servants. He finds that they never took a single phenomenon or element of nature and circumscribed to it completely, not even exhaustively to the God to whom they associated others with. In al-Faruqi's view, the 'association was always functional', accidental, but not total. Therefore, they were not *Mushrikun*. This is where one finds difficulty with al-Faruqi's excessive analysis, whilst nonetheless being interlocked with his imaginative ideas.

Relinquishing the Mesopotamians from the burden of *shirk*, al-Faruqi contrasts their view of God with the Egyptian perception of God. The Egyptians, he found, 'perceived the divine presence *immediately* in nature, the Mesopotamians *deduced* the divine presence *immediately* from nature'. He saw, in the Egyptian perception of God *in* and *of* nature whereas the Mesopotamian God was *in* but 'never equivalent to or convertible with it'.³ Al-Faruqi seems to prepare his ground for Arabism, both in a geographical and spiritual sense, as a corollary for his long and ardent argument of *Urubah*. Once he reconciled and, then, reinstated the Mesopotamians as monotheistically

inclined, the true realization of monotheism was 'rediscovered' and 'reaffirmed' when Islam succeeded them. He found this historically crude legacy buried under the rubble of Greek and/or Roman belief systems and their 'sacramentalist' versions of religion. Once the monotheistic set-up is established from the Arabian Peninsula, his *Urubah* theory finds its way and enters into the Near Eastern regions and the ancient Mesopotamian belt. Al-Faruqi pictures the Arabs and the regions they pertain to as rejoining the 'Semitic Civilization'.

Al-Faruqi was preoccupied with the specific scheme of *Urubah* or Arabism while at McGill University. His preconception of *Urubah* stemmed from his obsession with three stages of it. There is a contrast, for example, in al-Faruqi's concept of Arabism as compared to the Western understanding of nationalism which permeated so much of the Arab world especially during his lifetime. Al-Faruqi describes Arab nationalism as a product of the last two hundred years of Western political life, whilst Arabism, for him, is by contrast thousands of years old. Al-Faruqi's early writings place much emphasis on defining *Urubah* in a restricted sense, but thereafter, in later writings, he explains the wider term *Urubah*, to which he attributes a large part of the world and wherein he finds a degree of Arabness 'despite being non-Arabic speaking'. He described Arabism as an 'Arab stream' where the *Arabness*, in fact, 'animates that stream and gives it momentum', and provides them with 'their language, culture and religion'. This, he believes, the Arabs received in four succeeding waves, which he identifies as 'Muslims in the seventh century AD, and Arameans in the fifteenth century BC, as Amorites in the second and third, and as Akkadians in the fourth and fifth millennia BC.' Throughout these events, al-Faruqi finds 'something eternally and unchangeably Arab persisted throughout history and by so doing, the Arab essence gave identity to the Arab stream and continuity to the events that make up its history'.⁴

Al-Faruqi discusses his Arabism with reference to the three monotheistic religions with Middle Eastern foci. He extends his arguments beyond geographic regions and Abrahamic religions but little is known in historical terms. He begins his

progression theory with Judaism. The Judaic period, he emphasizes, starts with Abraham. He also distinguishes between the 'Hebrew' religion and 'Judaism'. One is the pre-exilic Judaism, the other 'post-exilic' Hebrew ritual. The post-exilic, he stresses, robs the Prophetic development of its continuity. He blames this lack of continuity of the Prophetic tradition on an overwhelming exclusionism. The Rabbinic tradition, al-Faruqi suggests, is responsible for de-railing Judaism from the Prophetic tradition of religion instead of guiding the Jewish people towards the exclusivism of people and land. He further argues that Jewish election theory is ethically unsustainable.

Al-Faruqi's concept of *Urubah*, however, and its extended use has its own critiques. Stanley Frost, then Dean of the Faculty of Divinity at McGill University, raised his own objections, stating: 'By what right do you take a part of the whole (presuming you have substantiated your thesis that there is such an identifiable stream) and make it the definitive, constituent element? In other words, is not "Arab" at best but one element, and if any inclusive word is to be found must not the word (and the idea) be "Semitic")? To say "Arab stream of Being" calls the whole concept into dispute.' This touched al-Faruqi's academic nerve as well as his Arab identity. So, here, we would like to quote, in part, his response to the Semitic and Arab claim, which Stanley Frost so poignantly identified:

I call this unique transcendence-consciousness Arab, rather than Semitic, because 'Arab' is not the name of an element in the Stream, of 'one among many'. Judaism, for instance, is Jewish because it is the religion of the Jews who were the inhabitants of Judah. But it is also Arab because geographically, ethnically, linguistically and ideologically, the Jews who were the inhabitants of Judah were one with the Arabs. The Jews were an element among other elements such as the Phoenicians, the Ananites, the Ancient Ma'inites, etc. But all these were Arabs. It is true that all Arabs in my sense are Semites, but this all-inclusive sense of 'Semite' is a relatively

modern – I suspect Western – concept. I doubt if any Semite people has represented to itself its own identity as 'Semitic'. You may ask, but has any of those peoples represented itself as Arab? The answer is yes, the 'Arabs' (in the smaller sense of Peninsula Arabs) have always done so. And since they are the fountainhead of all those other peoples, they may legitimately give their name to the whole. I do not know of any geographic, ethnic, linguistic or ideological evidence which relates the Semitic peoples including the Arabs to Canaan, or to Phoenicia, or to Babylon, or to Judah, so as to furnish as much as a claim that the Arab Stream of being is really a Canaanite, Phoenician, Babylonian or Jewish Stream of Being. Only the concept 'Semite' has laid such a claim, but it has done so on the strength of a modern distension of its denotation by Western scholars. If the Western scholar may, in the 19th century, pick out a concept (viz. 'Semitic') from the Jewish tradition and give it this all-inclusive sense, why may not I take the concept 'Arab' which is far more than a concept and restore to it in the 20th century the all-inclusive denotation which is its due?

So taken was al-Faruqi by the novelty he had discovered as also by the power of his new idea on *Unrubbah* that he troubled little to detach himself from the conclusions he drew from it. He moves on to focus on the second moment of Arab consciousness. A logical corollary for al-Faruqi was to link this to Christianity. Within the 'engrossed tribalism of the Jews' and the chronic pervasion of the Hebrews within the Arab stream, he discovered Christianity as the second moment of Arab consciousness. The message of Jesus was a solution to the Hebrew's problem. Jesus was a Jew and, as such, he was aware of their spirit and their influences. The Jews saw Jesus as a man with a mission and the mission started with his own people. The Jews, al-Faruqi argues, recognized that their Creator was going to sweep away their Hebrew exclusivism, and bring about a new moment of consciousness in the realm of their spirit, and ethics, indeed across

their entire system. Therefore, al-Faruqi points out, they 'resolved to put an end to Jesus' activity and life in order to protect, as they thought, the higher interest of that system and spirit'. Jesus and his message was interested in humanity, and Jesus was interested in the Jews as they were part of humanity 'and to the extent that he was born and lived in their midst and spoke their language'. Jesus preached loyalty to God and that God, above all, should be the criterion of all measurement. Jesus was not against the Jews *per se*, but clearly against the claim that they, above all people, are God's chosen children. The message of love thy neighbour was seen by the Hebrews as blasphemy. Love of God for them was love for the God of Israel. The Jewish love of law was seen as a protection against the growing popularity of Jesus' message. The teachings of Jesus reminded them of their weaknesses. Jesus' criticism of the Jewish community of his time was direct and hard-hitting, but above all the history of the concept of 'the Kingdom of God' as being for all intents and purposes the history of the Jewish people was boldly confronted. Jesus' teachings, then, challenged the core concepts and beliefs of Jewish thought. The notion that 'a kingdom that exists nowhere and everywhere, in the sense that it has no relation to any space but may exist wherever its constituents, the loving individuals, happen to be' was, al-Faruqi found, unacceptable to the Jews. At this challenging point in history, the creative and reshaping momentum of events had slowly but confidently been Hellenized.

With Christianity, al-Faruqi discovered that elements of Jesus' teachings were already present in Judaic traditions and in Hanifism in particular. Hanifism, to al-Faruqi, 'incorporates every noble thought in the Old Testament . . . from which sprang Christianity, the religion of the spirit and the interiorised ethic *par excellence*'. The essence of Christianity, for al-Faruqi, lies 'in Amos, and Jeremiah, even before the Exile'. Whether this specific discovery is correct or not is less important for us than what he sees as Christianity's entanglement in the history of the Hebrews producing a particular notion of salvation which he seems, himself, to rectify as giving a 'purely ethical "virgin

birth" ' to Christianity itself. Al-Faruqi seems to see himself as the one who has disentangled the concept of a possessive Lord and, in so doing, reinstated Jesus' affirmation of the universalism of religion which was in direct opposition to Jewish notions of ethnocentrism.

The term 'Hanifism' appears quite often in al-Faruqi's writings, and this concept of Hanifism plays a crucial role in his exposé of the region's religious history. Thus, it may not be out of place here to find out what he means by this. He describes the *Hanifs* who upheld the Abrahamic tradition amongst the Arabs as distinctly different but present in almost every tribe of Arabia. Their opposition to *shirk*, their refusal to participate in pagan rituals, their love of knowledge and of maintaining themselves as ethically different, became the hallmark of the *Hanif(s)*. Since their beliefs and practices in daily life were closer to Jewish practices, despite their linguistic differences, they have condescendingly been called *hampari* in Aramaic, meaning 'separated'. Hence, they were somewhat neglected, and given less importance in society. Very often they had to take refuge amongst the desert tribes, and al-Faruqi argues that this in turn became helpful in further preserving the *hanif(s)* identity and purity. He suggests that before the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him), three attempts were made to reinstate Abrahamic monotheism amongst the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula and these were respectively made by the Prophets Hud, Salih and Shu'ayb in Hadramaut and Hijaz. All failed because the people refused to accept these Prophets and instead Arab *shirk* or associationism persisted.

Al-Faruqi suggests that the different phases of Revelation pertain to the stages of the progression of *Unubah*. Judaism he views as the first moment of Arab consciousness, Christianity as the second and the contemporary phase as the continuation of *Unubah* and Islam. But does he expect yet another phase, either now or in the future? Yes, and al-Faruqi describes this phase as that of Islamist assertion; a new phase of Islamic consciousness. The requirement of any new value must be unknown, but, in relation to Islam, al-Faruqi finds that this is not so because 'no

value can be new to Islam as such since this is the collective name of all values'. To al-Faruqi, 'the Islamicness of value is no more than its value-ness', and if in *Unubah* new 'values [are] to be discovered' then the logical conclusion in al-Faruqi's view is that 'the discovered values should be "Islamic" '. Put simply, any 'new value' and its relationship with other values has to be worked out and established and 'must cohere with [the] legacy of the Ummah'.

Al-Faruqi does not see this progression as a casual process in mechanistic terms. Rather, it is planned, but human beings are free to choose their own path and the goals they invent. Therefore, the Prophets act as reminders, critiques and reformers in al-Faruqi's concept of progression. One may find in al-Faruqi's scheme of progression, some influence from Ibn Hazm who looked at the movement of these three religions in a similar fashion, but al-Faruqi detaches himself from any such observation. Muhammad Abduh restated Ibn Hazm's progression theory in an entirely different context, i.e., in the context of science and civilization. He saw the progression of humanity as occupying three stages: '[C]hildhood, when man needed stern discipline as a child; the Law of Moses, Adolescence, when man relied on feelings; the Age of Christianity. Maturity, when man relies on Reason and Science . . . the Age of Islam.'

In this progression, however, does one religious personality borrow from another? Al-Faruqi contends such views and especially some Western scholars' proposition that Islam has borrowed from Judaism and Christianity. He argues that simple co-existence and 'identical religious personalities' do not suggest 'borrowing'. He emphasizes that it is 'repugnant to speak of "borrowing" between any two movements, an earlier and a later one, when the latter sees itself as a continuation and reform of the earlier'. He finds that the same scholars do not speak of Christianity 'borrowing' from Judaism, Buddhism from Hinduism, or Protestantism from Catholicism. Yet that is precisely how Islam sees itself regarding Judaism and Christianity, namely, as the very same identity but reformed and purged of accumulated tamperings and changes by leaders and scribes.

In reading al-Faruqi, one easily detects that in order to

establish his progression theory, he has to devise a method, a neutral one, to judge Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The methodology he proposed in *Christian Ethics: A Historical and Systematic Analysis of Its Dominant Ideas* is what he calls Meta-Religion, and here he argues that those believers whose religions are compared should be listened to by the comparator. The search for the truth is for the most part a self-analysis of enquiry. Here a researcher is more than a mere spectator. In a way, a researcher is examining the activity of his own spirit in his/her own interaction with the world around him/her. There is a need, in al-Faruqi's comparative religious view, to relate or evaluate, and he strongly believes this provides overall principles which are not 'constrained by any religious tradition' or through which any religious tradition can be judged. He suggests six such principles, which can be summarized as:

1. 'Being of Two Realms: Ideal and Actual', where 'the ideal and the actual are different kinds of being, they are two'. He elaborates from this standpoint of ethics, arguing: 'Fact and value are two orders of being. If this duality were not true, and fact and value belonged to the same order of being, it would be groundless to judge one "fact" by "another".'
2. 'Ideal Being is Relevant to Actual Being.' 'Since the ideal realm acts as a principle of classification, of the order and structure of actual being, it provides the standard to judge if the actual is or is not valuable.'
3. 'Relevance of the Ideal to the Actual is a Command.' Al-Faruqi stresses that the 'whole realm of ideal being is relevant to the whole realm of actual being'. The actual being has to be judged as what it ought to be. Their relationship is not based on this and the other, rather their relationship is either/or. In other words, the relevance of 'ideal' is superior and the 'actual' has to strive to attain the 'ideal'.
4. But judging on this basis, i.e., either/or, the actual being cannot become 'bad'. . . The 'Actual Being is as Such Good'. 'The realm of actual', as al-Faruqi describes it, is

this-world. This-world is good; to enter it, to be in it, is as such valuable.

5. To 'value' the world, to mould the world and give a direction, so that it can 'embody the structure and content of the ideal, value realization: must be possible'. Therefore . . . the 'Actual Being is Malleable'. He states that 'man can and does give new direction to the casual, forward push of reality, in order to become something else, something other than he would otherwise be'.
6. 'Perfection of the Cosmos is Only a Human Burden.' He points out that the importance of man is that he is the only creature who holds the key to the 'entrance of the valuational ideal into the actual'. He argues: 'Man is the bridge which values must cross if they are to enter the real. He stands at the crossroads of the two realms of being, participating in both, susceptible to both.'⁶

In the critiques' eyes al-Faruqi is struggling to convince the reader. Not only in what he proposes as Meta-Religion in the introductory chapter of *Christian Ethics*, but in his whole critical proposition of *Christian Ethics* itself. He writes to Stanley Foster on 9 December 1961:

You may disagree with me that this is carrying the argument of an analysis of Christian ethics too far. My defence is that I have no other fulcrum from which to direct my critique. If my fulcrum were to be internal to Christianity, my critique would be merely another Christianist treatise. If, on the other hand, it were external to Christianity, my critique would be either a copy of an Ibn Hazm's or other Middle Ages Muslim critic of Christianity or of a Karl Marx or some other Western atheist. My strategy has been to choose a fulcrum which though external to Christianity (credal Christianity) may still be internal to Christianity.

The journey from *Urubah* to *Ummatic* concerns, i.e., from Arab to Muslim concerns, began soon after al-Faruqi joined the Muslim Students Association (MSA) in the United States. Taking

a leaf out of Jamaluddin al-Afgani's book, al-Faruqi also formed a group called *Urwah al-Wutuqa*. Like Afghani, he focused his thoughts on Muslim unity through this forum. Al-Faruqi approached the subject in two ways. In the first instance, he sought to give the non-Muslim audience the zeal to rediscover the Islamic heritage, and he encouraged fellow Muslims to witness (*Shahādah*) Islam by example and by good words and so provide a sound reference for non-Muslims. In the second instance, he sought to restructure the dreadful holes created in the realms of thought and knowledge by the challenges of modernity and colonialization.

Al-Faruqi, time and again, emphasized the importance of da'wah. He saw da'wah as a duty incumbent upon all Muslims. A duty to reach others. He spoke frequently on this subject in America, Europe and Asia, and two of his writings on the issue, 'On the Nature of Islamic Da'wah' and 'Da'wah in the West: Promise and Trial', are included here. He viewed the instinct of da'wah as synonymous with mission and as present in all religions. 'No religion can avoid mission if it has any kind of intellectual backbone', he says and to 'deny mission' in his view 'is to deny the need to demand the agreement of others to what is being claimed to be the truth by the religion'.²

Characteristically, al-Faruqi went even further than this and demanded agreement, arguing that 'not to demand agreement' shows a lack of seriousness. Da'wah to him, by its very nature, carries 'a necessary corollary of its affirmations and denials' where anybody is free to invite others. Yet the kernal of da'wah lies in its integrity 'on the part of both caller and called'.

Da'wah, in al-Faruqi's writings, is also motivated by the fact that Islam is the most misunderstood religion. He identifies the reasons for this in a very provocative way. Islam, he argues, is:

the only religion that contended and fought with most of the world religions on their own home ground, whether in the field of ideas, or on the battlefields of history. Islam has been engaged in these wars – whether spiritual or political – even before it was born, before it became autonomous at home, even before it completed its own

system of ideas. And it is still vigorously fighting on all fronts. Moreover, Islam is the only religion that in its interreligious and international conflict with Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism, succeeded significantly and in major scale in all the fights it undertook. Equally, it was the only religion that marshalled all its spiritual efforts to fight Western colonialism and imperialism throughout the world when its territory – indeed, its very heartland – was fragmented and practically all its adherents subjected to the colonialist yoke. Finally, and yet more significantly, Islam is still winning today and growing by means of mission and conversion at a greater rate than any other religion. No wonder, then, that it is the religion with the greatest number of enemies and, hence, the religion most misunderstood.³

The basic characteristics of da'wah, in al-Faruqi's view, lie in its nature. He highlights these important characteristics as Freedom, Rationality and Universalism.

Da'wah without freedom cannot succeed, it can only succeed 'with absolute integrity on the part of both caller and called'. This is essential. To him, for 'either party to tamper with that integrity' is a 'capital crime'. He argues that 'invitation', which is the literal meaning of da'wah, 'can be fulfilled only with the free consent of the called'. He refers to this call as a call towards God. He argues that since 'the objective is to convince the called that God is his Creator, Master, Lord and Judge, forced judgement is a contradiction in terms'. Conversion, he highlights, is not a conversion towards Islam but to God. The question remains, however, whether al-Faruqi is content with the conversion of a person who turns and begins to believe in God without believing in Islam in a confessional sense, i.e., can this be regarded as a true conversion or not? Al-Faruqi seems uncomfortable in answering this question straight away. Rationality demands, al-Faruqi observes, that the judgement to change 'should be arrived at only after consideration of the alternatives, their comparison and contrast with one another, after the precise, unhurried and

objective weighing of evidence and counter-evidence with reality'. By asserting the rational aspects of da'wah, al-Faruqi seems to dismiss any underhand method of approaching this sensitive issue. He strongly contends what he calls 'psychopathic expansion' or elsewhere 'psychotropic induction'. Al-Faruqi juxtaposes this assertion against the Hebrew concept of 'election' or 'favouritism'. This universalism of da'wah in al-Faruqi's writings somewhat unexpectedly connects other faiths in the sense that God, being the Source, means that He has given the truth to those who are not Muslims, not only individually but also collectively, for truth can be found inside their traditions. This is what al-Faruqi calls a *de jure* mission simply because the source of the truth is God. If one accepts this argument, the whole outlook of mission and da'wah is changed. It turns, as al-Faruqi puts it, into a 'cooperative critique' of the other religion and avoids its invasion by a new truth'.

The reconstruction of Muslim thought preoccupied al-Faruqi's thought in his later life. His participation in the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) in the United States, which came into existence in 1971, gave birth to the concept of the *Islamization of Knowledge*. Initially, the AMSS was seen as an occasional platform for some social scientists to get together, but al-Faruqi's participation, as its President until 1976, and his input soon brought about the required change. Bit by bit this forum for social scientists, with their shared common concerns, began to give the *Islamization of Knowledge* a new agenda. This, in turn, transformed the organization and attracted much attention beyond the initial social scientist framework and extended further than the United States. To al-Faruqi, *Islamization* was not simply to label, after some laundering, the existing knowledge into Islamic knowledge; rather, he wanted to provoke his fellow social scientists and the Muslim community living in the West into re-examining, and reshaping the social sciences in light of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. Perhaps he saw the contemporary Muslim community in the West as better suited to this task than the Muslim Ummah in Muslim countries, whom he found somewhat unwilling or unable. Essentially the

freedom of thought and exchange of ideas that this task required was non-existent in the Muslim World. Those who seemed to have the skills and were equipped with the classical training of interpretation and explanation, were unfortunately unaware of the Western trends in knowledge and the rigorous arguments it demands. Al-Faruqi, then, saw himself as something of an initiator. His contribution lay in his skill to present the *Islamization of Knowledge* as a movement and not as a venture limited to just a few individuals. Even in this task, his confrontational posture did not diminish:

We have an extremely important task ahead of us. How long are we going to content ourselves with the crumbs that the West is throwing at us? It is about time that we made our own original contribution. As social scientists, we have to look back at our training and reshape it in the light of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. This is how our forefathers made their own original contributions to the study of history, law and culture. The West borrowed their heritage and put it in a secular mould. Is it asking for too much that we take knowledge and *Islamize* it?⁹

Although al-Faruqi's immediate audience was his students and colleagues in various Muslim organizations across the United States, he nonetheless took this task on with a missionary zeal, addressing audiences well beyond American shores. His eyes were fixed on the heartland of the Muslim World. There, along with a growing number of Muslim intellectuals in the West, he saw much need for change. In particular, he identified a stagnation in Islamic learning in the Muslim World, especially in *madaris*. There, the once vibrant, innovative concept of education had been replaced with a repetitive, inward-looking one preoccupied with preservation. He also saw a lack of excellence in modern education. What 'modern education' there was, he argued, was implanted into the Muslim World, and it 'remained', in his view, 'sterile and ritualistic with a false aura of progress'. Thus, he was not simply concerned with the colonialization of Muslim territories but also with

the colonization of Muslim minds. Generations of Muslims educated in the West had produced a host of Western-educated Muslims who 'looked up to the Western knowledge' as he put it, 'despite its irrelevance, [and] made them dependent on its research and leadership'. He was critical of past reformers like Syed Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Abduh, who, he believed, thought 'that Western sciences were value neutral and that they would not do any harm to Islamic values'. This he vehemently rejected. He saw in their approach an adoption of 'alien' methods of inquiry into various social science disciplines. He argued that little 'did they know of the fine yet necessary relation which binds the methodologies of these disciplines, their notions of truth and knowledge, to the value system of an alien world'. Al-Faruqi's critical assessment predicted that any unquestioning adaptation of the value of knowledge would harm the Muslim Ummah's understanding and would not produce the much-needed inquiry and missionary mind that the Ummah so urgently needed. However, al-Faruqi could not preside over the vision he had for long. Even now with a generation having gone through the process of *Islamization* there is little sign that it will make the significant mark on the 'quality' of scholars that al-Faruqi envisaged. Perhaps this is still far in the future. Muslims generally, including their religious leaders, and the Westernized Muslim elite in particular, he argued, were dazzled by 'Western productivity and power and the Western views of God and man, of life, of nature, of the world, and of time and history...'.¹⁰ Thus, a secular system of education was built which taught Western values and methods, and which produced graduates ignorant of their Islamic legacy.

Al-Faruqi was trained as a philosopher and a historian of religion, but his writings do not follow the traditional academic route – which demands a detached view of religion and the people studied. Rather, he examines religions from an Islamic perspective, on the basis of truth and the methods he devised for determining the same.

Al-Faruqi looked at religion with keen and critical eyes, examining deeply its unity and source. He had a world-view

and pattern of thought, whose heart lay in Islam. His inquiring mind was always challenged by the many facets and traditions which he tried to go beyond, and, in so doing, he challenged our vision and way of understanding and measuring things. In the process, he engages us attentively but does not necessarily lead us always to his own conclusions. The reader is free to accept or reject what he says, but he cannot ignore it.

The essays in this volume by Ismail Raji al-Faruqi span more than two decades. Essays which deal directly with other faiths, and with Christianity and Judaism in particular, have been especially selected. These, in themselves, bear witness to al-Faruqi's devotion to scholarly life and to inter-religious dialogue. The 11 articles collected here, provide a good cross-section of al-Faruqi's contribution to the study of comparative religions. Here an attempt has been made to compile and collect his contribution on the theme into a single volume and thus make them available to a wider audience. These essays do, however, need to be seen against the background of his gigantic contribution to the study of religions. Such publications include *The Great Asian Religions* (New York: Macmillan, 1969) which he co-edited with three other scholars, including Joseph M. Kitagawa, and his *Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World* (New York: Macmillan, 1975) which he edited with David E. Sopher (map editor), *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York: Macmillan, 1986) edited with his wife, Lois Lamya al-Faruqi, and published soon after their brutal murder in Chicago in the same year.

The four chapters in Part I, 'The Essence of Religious Experience in Islam', 'Divine Transcendence and Its Expression', 'The Role of Islam in Global Inter-Religious Dependence' and 'A Comparison of the Islamic and Christian Approaches to Hebrew Scripture', demonstrate how al-Faruqi saw the core and connection between the religions of the Near East. He examines religions prior to and after Abraham, and shows how the Islamic world-view of religion approaches the subject. He reveals how Islam, particularly, relates itself to both Jewish and Christian Scriptures. We had the choice here of either including al-Faruqi's revised article 'Meta-Religion: Towards a Critical

World Theology', published in the *American Journal of Islamic Social Science* (Vol. 3, No. 1, September 1986), or of retaining its earlier version, 'The Role of Islam in Global Inter-Religious Dependence'. In the end, we decided to retain the earlier version: first, there is very little change except in the introductory and concluding parts which, we believe, are covered, to a large extent, in other chapters in this book. Second, and more importantly, the earlier version includes a discussion that followed al-Faruqi's original presentation. With a few minor changes, we have included the entire discussion in this chapter.

Part II collects together his writings on Islam and Christianity and their dialogical relations. Judaism, however, occupies a substantial part of this debate. This section includes a chapter on the 'Rights of Non-Muslims Under Islam: Social and Cultural Aspects'. It may seem slightly out of context to include this here. However, it does provide a glimpse of al-Faruqi's views on Muslim and non-Muslim relations, particularly non-Muslims in a Muslim-majority country. It is our view that since it was first published in 1979, the debate on these aspects has moved on considerably, with *dhimma* now being discussed in the context of citizenship.

Part III focuses on the issue of da'wah. Here we have selected two articles: 'On the Nature of Islamic Da'wah' presents the principles and theoretical aspects of da'wah presented in the Chambéry Dialogue between Christians and Muslims in 1976, whilst the other was presented to a Muslim audience in 1981. These two chapters provide the opportunity for the reader to see how al-Faruqi perceived the relevance of da'wah particularly in a Western context.

Finally, the reader may find, in places, that certain statements and arguments have been repeated. With selections such as these, this is bound to happen. However, we believe such repetitions are minimal and we have done our best to ensure major repetitions are avoided.

Leicester
20 January 1998

Ataullah Siddiqui

Notes

1. Al-Faruqi's letter dated 14 November 1963.
2. I.R. Al Faruqi and L.L. Al Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), p. 50.
3. I.R. Al Faruqi, 'Divine Transcendence and Its Expression', in Henry O. Thompson (ed.), *The Global Congress of the World's Religions, Proceedings of 1980-82 Conference* (Washington, DC: The Global Congress of the World's Religions, Inc., 1982), pp. 267-316.
4. I.R. Al Faruqi, *Unbuh and Religion* (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1962), pp. 2-3.
5. Letter dated 9.12.1961 to Stanley Frost, Dean of the Faculty of Divinity, McGill University.
6. Ataullah Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 88-9.
7. I.R. Al Faruqi and L.L. Al Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, op. cit., p. 187.
8. I.R. Al Faruqi, 'Islam', in Wing-tsit Chan et al. (eds.), *The Great Asian Religions* (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 307.
9. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1988), p. 16.
10. International Institute of Islamic Thought, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (Herndon, Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, Second Revised Edition, 1989), p. 4.

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Biblical quotations are from the Authorized Version, Qur'ānic references are based on Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation published by the Amana Corporation (Brentwood, Maryland, USA, 1983); however in most cases translation of the verses is provided by al-Faruqi himself.

PART I

CHAPTER ONE

The Essence of Religious Experience in Islam

I

The title evidently presupposes that an essence of religious experience exists and that such an essence is knowable. Otherwise, the effort to discover such essence and to establish it for the understanding would be in vain and futile. On this account, no statement about the essence of religious experience in Islam or any other religion can afford to overlook these methodological assumptions, or fail to establish them critically. Moreover, it is quite conceivable that some religions would – granted they have an essence – regard its critical establishment for the understanding as irreligious or even necessarily false. For the investigator to flout such attitude on the part of the religion in question is to commit the reductionist fallacy and hence to vitiate his own findings. This cannot be avoided unless the religion itself blesses the attempt, that is to say, unless it admits readily and unequivocally that it has an essence and that this essence is knowable. Three questions therefore must be answered in the positive before we proceed to our task; namely: Does the Islamic religious experience have an essence? Is it critically knowable? Does its critical establishment violate any constituent element of that experience?

To my knowledge, no Muslim thinker has ever denied that his religion has an essence. Granted that the question itself is a modern question and that the thinkers of the Middle Ages did not raise it in the manner we do today, we can still say with certainty that for all of them, Islam was religion, religion *par excellence*, indeed 'the religion'; that it was a coherent, autonomous system of truths about reality, of imperatives for action and of desiderata for all kinds and levels of human activity. All of them affirmed that at the centre of this system stood God (may He be Glorified and Exalted), the knowledge of Whom they called *tawhīd*; that all the rest is a hierarchy of imperatives (*wājibāt*), recommendations (*mandūbāt* and *makrūhāt*), prohibitions (*muḥarramāt*) and desiderata (*ḥasanāt*) - collectively called the *Shari'ah* and knowledge of which the Muslims called *fiqh*.

As for the non-Muslim students of Islam, i.e. the orientalisks, none of them raised this question except Wilfred C. Smith. From his inaugural lecture in 1952 to his *magnum opus*, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, he consistently maintained that there is no such essence. He held that there are only Muslims whose Muslimness is a new thing with every morn, always changing. This is Heraclitean enough. But unlike fatalist, pessimist Heraclitus (fl. 500 BC), who never entertained the possibility of changing the eternal flux of things, Smith definitely claimed the possibility and desirability of changing the direction of the infinite flux of states of Muslimness. How he identifies the object of change among countless other possible objects; and how he will be able to claim that a change of direction has or has not taken place from any point in the eternal flux, he never tells. Indeed, the Parmenidean-Platonic-Aristotelian-Kantian and phenomenological argument that change itself is inconceivable without a substrate that remains the same in the change, has not impressed him as much as the metaphysical claim that all there is to the phenomenon of burning is the burning itself. In this philosophical inconsequence, he is not alone. A whole school of positivists, sceptics, cynics and pseudo-scientists have made the same claim.

Smith was the first orientalist to demand autonomy for the Islamic discipline, to condemn all interpretations of Islam made

under alien categories. His essay 'Comparative Religion: Whither - and Why?' published in honour of Joachim Wach (1898-1955)¹ was the first and still is the classical statement of the Western student-of-religion's need for humility in front of the data of another religion; and the McGill University Institute of Islamic Studies, of which he was the architect and founder and which stood on the principle that the study of Islam must be cooperatively undertaken by Muslims and Westerners if it is to achieve any valid understanding of its subject matter,² was for some time a living monument to this attitude. All this notwithstanding, Smith suspended this supreme demand when he came to discuss the essence of Islam. Indeed, he devoted a substantial part of his book to telling the Muslims what is a truer understanding of their scripture, the Arabic Qur'ān.³ Against the fourteen centuries of Muslim Qur'ānic scholarship and understanding, he concluded that the claim that Islam was a system and has an essence is a relatively modern affair arising out of three tendencies or processes of reification to which the Muslims have been subject in history. These are: Influence of the reified Near Eastern religions upon the Qur'ān, of the reifying hypostases of Greek thought upon Islamic thought, and of modernist apologetics.⁴

The first was merely claimed by Smith. The circumstantial fact that Persian religion, Judaism and Christianity were already reified when Islam made its appearance proves nothing. Any other form could well have been adopted. In fact, the seventh-century Near East was not divided between two or three giant monolithic systems. A thousand and one varieties of religious views belonging to every conceivable part of the spectrum of religious development - from Stone Age animism to philosophical mysticism - were evident on all shores of the Mediterranean. Moreover, granted the 'reification' of some Near Eastern religious traditions, it takes other evidence besides factuality to prove that this process was a change for the worse in the said Near Eastern religions; that is to say, and as Smith holds, that it was one in which piety and religiosity were giving place to a shell emptied of religious feeling. Finally, there is still no

reason why the increased conceptual precision implied in reification may not be taken advantage of by any man or movement within or without the said Near Eastern religions. On the contrary, it would be strange indeed if any subsequent movement omitted to take such advantage; if, in other words, God had not done His homework in the course of study called 'The History of Religions'. It would seem that if he is to prove his point, Smith would have to establish the necessary incompatibility of reification with religiosity. But this he has not done; and his claim remains unsubstantiated.

Secondly, it is an established fact that the Persian and Jewish religions had done nothing to proselytize Arabia, and that the extreme little which either of them did in Yaman was incidental to political imperialism and never amounted to anything worthy of being called 'religious movement'. It is historical fact that none of these religions had achieved any place or esteem in the mind of Makkah or among the *badu* living in the wide expanses of the desert. Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians were aliens inadmissible to the temple area as well as into the city of Makkah. They had to reside in the outskirts and to do so under the constant protection of native Arabs whose clients they were. Moreover, it is a fact that Persia encouraged Arab paganism to stand up to Byzantine Christianity, while the latter reconciled itself to peaceful coexistence with that paganism.⁵

As for the reifying hypostases of Greek thought, it is common knowledge that Hellenism began to invade Muslim letters and thought in the late eight and ninth centuries, two hundred years after the advent of Islam, whereas the so-called 'reification' was complete with the birth of Islam itself. Its terminus is the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and its evidence, substance and text are the Qur'ān itself. Greek thought is hence utterly irrelevant to the question at hand. So is the argument from Muslim apologetics in modern times. Factual or otherwise as they may be, these arguments prove nothing if the 'reified' result is Qur'ānic.⁶

It is here, i.e., as regards the Qur'ān, that Smith lays his weakest claim. Not only does he tell the Muslims what Qur'ānic

meanings are but he takes the fanciest issues with their linguistic and exegetical scholars and makes some quite unusual pretensions. The term 'Islam' in *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 85 ('Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted of him') and *al-Mā'idah* 5: 4 ('Today, I have completed for you your religion, made total My blessing which has been granted to you and accepted for you Islam as your religion') are first interpreted as meaning 'submission, obedience to His commands'. Of course! any Muslim will retort! How can 'Islam' not mean these things? And who has ever claimed the contrary? That 'Islam' means these things is beyond question. But this for Smith means that the term means *nothing else*; above all, that it does not mean that 'Islam' is a religion in the reified sense, i.e., a system of propositions, imperatives and desiderata. But this is an obvious *non sequitur*. That 'Islam' means submission and personal piety does not preclude it from meaning a religious system of ideas and imperatives. If this is contended, the Muslims' understanding across the centuries is conclusive. That is why Smith resorted to the attempt to establish that, in the early Muslims' understanding, 'Islam' connoted a personal attitude of piety rather than a religious system.

In pursuit of this objective, Smith took the definition of 'Islam' by al-Ṭabarī (d. 302 AH/915 CE), namely, 'submission to My command and self-determination to obedience to Me', which al-Ṭabarī continues with 'in accordance with its obligations, prohibitions and notable recommendations prescribed by Me for your benefit'. Unable to appreciate the sudden transfer from the addressive to the third person form of Arabic letters, Smith took the 'obligations, prohibitions and notable recommendations' to refer to 'command', rather than to 'Islam', the *definiendum*. Arabically, this is utterly unacceptable. It turns the whole sentence upside-down and makes ugly brokenness out of its literary flow. If we may not question Smith's Arabic abilities, we must conclude that he had bent the language to suit a preconceived argument.

Secondly, the literal, obvious and common sense meaning of *al-Mā'idah* 5: 4, namely, 'Today, I have completed for you your

religion. . . Smith calls a 'modern interpretation', a 'nowadays' interpretation, and leads his reader to suppose that the understanding that this verse signalled the completion of the religious system of Islam is an understanding of 'nowadays', of modern times, of the decades after World War II.⁷

This is not all. That the occasion of the revelation of this verse, as well as the whole of *Sūrah al-Mā'idah* is the last pilgrimage of the Prophet is an established historical fact beyond doubt. The same al-Ṭabarī, whom Smith reports as ignorant of the *Sitz-im-Leben* of revelation of this verse, says on pages 524–9 of volume IX of his great *Tafsīr* (Old Edition) that this verse was revealed 'fi yaumi jum'ah wa kāna yaumu 'Arafāt, Yaum al-waqfah, wa lam ya'ish al-nabiyyu ba'dahā illā wāḥidan wa thamānina aw ithnayni wa thamānina yauman' ('on a Friday which was the day of standing in worship on Mount 'Arafāt [the consummation of the Pilgrimage], and the Prophet did not live any longer than 81 or 82 days thereafter.') A little further, on page 531 of the same work, al-Ṭabarī says verbatim: 'Hadhihi āyah bi 'Arafāt fi ḥujjat al-wadā' ('This verse was revealed on 'Arafāt on the occasion of the Prophet's farewell pilgrimage'). Is this not proof enough that towards the end of his life, the Prophet received a revelation which does in fact purport to declare the completion of the revelation, of the religious system of Islam?

That this is the meaning of the verse was held at least as early as al-Jāhiz (d. 253 AH/868 CE), who gave us in his *Al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn* the full text of the Prophet's farewell sermon, a century and a half before al-Ṭabarī. In the same place al-Ṭabarī has carefully reported, as if foreseeing Smith's misunderstanding of the whole affair, that 'other historians have indeed held that this verse was revealed to the Prophet of God as he marched in his farewell pilgrimage'.⁸ The story is complete in Ibn Sa'd's *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* and practically every historian and reporter (*muḥaddith*) since. No one of these had ever accused his colleagues or predecessors of such an invention as Smith had accused them. In his work especially devoted to the analysis of the historical *Sitz-im-Leben* of the Qur'anic revelations entitled *Ashāb al-Nuzūl* (Cairo: M.B. Halabi, 1379/1959), Abū al-Ḥasan

'Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī (d. 468 AH/1096 CE) repeated the same claim in terms identical to those of al-Ṭabarī. Whereas al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538 AH/1444 CE) the Mu'tazilī rationalist, wrote in his exegesis, the whole story of the Prophet's farewell pilgrimage in 11 AH/632 CE,⁹ al-Iskāfī, an earlier Qur'anic scholar (d. 431 AH/1040 CE), held – contrary to Smith's allegation – that 'Muslimūn' and 'Mu'minūn' are synonymous terms and quoted *al-Naml* 27: 81 in support. It is in this verse that the Qur'ān defined *muslimūn* in terms of *īmān*.¹⁰ Even Ibn Ishāq (d. 151 AH/768 CE) who gave us the earliest biography of the Prophet uses the term 'Islam' in both the 'reified' and 'non-reified' senses. In one passage he calls the *Anṣār* of Madinah 'the battalion of Islam'.¹¹ Smith's contention that reification was a later phenomenon does not stand a casual reading of any early Islamic source work. As for Smith's claim that al-Ṭabarī remained silent – which we have just shown to be false – on the occasion of the verse in question, it is definitely an argument *e silencio* and more. For although Smith knew it was *e silencio*, he still found fit to mention it. Certainly then he wished his reader to suspect that the meaning of the verse was 'apparently unknown in the third century to al-Ṭabarī and to those of the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) whose views he reports'.¹² Al-Ṭabarī's silence should have kept Smith silent too, logically speaking, for to argue *e silencio* is to commit a fallacy. But it did not. Smith's mistake is hence doubled.

II

What is the essence of religious experience in Islam?

At the core of religious experience in Islam stands God. The *shahādah* or confession of Islam asserts: 'There is no God but God.' The name of God, 'Allah', which simply means 'the God', occupies the central position in every Muslim place, every Muslim action, every Muslim thought. The presence of God fills the Muslim's consciousness at all times. With the Muslim, God is indeed a sublime obsession. What does it mean?

Muslim philosophers and theologians have battled it out among themselves for centuries, and the issue culminated in the arguments of al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) and Ibn Rushd (1126–98). For the philosophers, the issue was one of saving the orderliness of the universe. The world, they argued, is a *cosmos*, i.e., a realm in which order and law prevail, where things happen by a cause and causes cannot be without their proper effects. In this stand they were heirs to the Greek, the Mesopotamian and the Ancient Egyptian legacies of religion and philosophy. Creation itself was for these traditions passage from chaos to cosmos. The Muslims entertained the highest ideas of transcendence and nobility of the divine being, but they could not conceive of that being as consistent with a chaotic world.

The theologians, for their part, feared that such an emphasis on the orderliness of the universe necessarily renders God a *deus otiosus*; that it leaves Him little to do once He has created the world and built thereinto the clockwork mechanisms necessary to set everything in causal motion. They were right. For a world in which everything happens according to a cause and where causes are all natural – i.e., in and from the world – is one in which everything happens necessarily and hence is a world which does not need God. Such a God would never satisfy the religious feeling. Either He is He by Whom everything is, by Whom everything that happens happens, or He is no God at all. By intricate argument, they showed that such a God as the philosophers taught was either ignorant of what happens, incapable of controlling or initiating it, or that there was some other God besides Him, who is the real cause and master of all. Hence, they rejected the philosophers' view and invented the doctrine called 'occasionalism'. This is the theory that at every moment of time, God recreates the world and thus makes happen all that happens therein. They replaced the necessity of causality with the trust that God, being just and righteous, will not deceive but will see to it that the right effect will always follow upon the right cause. The upshot of the matter was not the establishment of causality, but of divine presence, and of

accommodating causality to that presence. The theologians carried a sweeping victory over the philosophers.

Behind the theologians' position stands the Muslim's experience, where God is not merely an absolute, ultimate first cause or principle but a core of normativeness. It is this aspect of God that suffers most in any theory where God becomes a *deus otiosus*; and it is the Muslim's responsiveness to this core of normativeness that the philosophers' theory throws out of joint.

God as normativeness means that He is the being who commands. His movements, thoughts and deeds are all realities beyond doubt, but everyone of these insofar as man conceives of it is for him a value, an ought-to-be, even when, in the case where it is already realized, no ought-to-do flows from it. Besides being metaphysical, God's ultimacy is not for the Muslim isolable from, or emphasizeable at the cost of, the axiological. If we were to allow the Muslim here to use the category of 'the value of knowledge', he would say that the value of the metaphysical is that it may exercise its imperativeness, its moving appeal or normativeness.

God is the final end, i.e., the end at which all finalistic nexus aim and come to rest. Everything is sought for another which in turn is sought for a third and so on and hence demands the nexus or chain to continue until a final end is reached which is an end-in-itself. God is such an end, an end for all other ends, all chains of ends. He is the ultimate object of all desire. As such it is He Who makes every other good good; for unless the final end is posited, every link in the chain is undone. The final end is the axiological ground of all chains or nexus of ends.

It follows from this conception of God as ultimate finalistic terminus and axiological ground that He must be unique. Obviously, if this were not the case, the question would have to be raised again regarding the priority or ultimacy of one to the other. It is of the very nature of a finalistic end to be unique. The Qur'ān has put it succinctly: 'If there were other Gods in heaven and earth besides God, heaven and earth would have fallen down.'¹ It is this uniqueness which the Muslim affirms in his confession of faith, 'There is no God but God.' In the long history

of religions, the Muslim's assertion of God's existence would have come late. Indeed God had told him in the Qur'an that 'there is no people unto whom He had not sent a prophet', and that 'no prophet but had been sent to teach the worship and service of God'. But his assertion of the uniqueness of God is new. It brought a refreshing iconoclasm at a time and place where dualism and trinitarianism were the higher, and polytheism the lower state of religious consciousness. And, in order to purge that consciousness free once and for all, Islam demanded utmost care in the use of language and percepts appropriate to the unique God: 'Father', 'intercessor', 'saviour', 'son', etc., were utterly banished from the religious vocabulary; and the uniqueness and absolute transcendence of the divine being were stressed that no man may claim any relation to God which all other men cannot claim. Islam held as a matter of principle that no man or being is one iota nearer to God than any other. That all creation is creaturely, that it stands on this side of the line dividing the transcendent from the natural, is the necessary presupposition of God's axiological ultimacy.

The relevance of this 'unicity' of God to the religious life of the person is easier to grasp. Man's heart always harbours lesser deities than God, and human intention is nearly always beclouded with desiderata of varying orders of rank. The noblest intention is, as Kant (1724-1804) had taught, the purest, i.e., purified from all objectives of '*die Willkür*'. And the purest, Islam teaches, is that of which God is the sole occupant after all *Willkür* objects are removed and banished.

To perceive God as core or normativeness, as an end whose very being is imperativeness and desirability, is not possible unless there are beings for whom this normativeness is normative. For normativeness is a relational concept. For it to be, there must be creatures for whom the divine command is both perceivable (and hence knowable) as well as realizable. Relationality is not relativity and should not be understood as implying that God is dependent upon, or needful for, man and his world. In Islam, God is self-sufficient; but this self-sufficiency does not preclude the creation of a world in which men find the

imperativeness and realize its ought-to-be's. At the core of the Islamic religious experience, therefore, stands God Who is unique and Whose will is the imperative and guide for all men's lives. The Qur'an has put it dramatically. It portrays God as announcing to His angels His intention of creating the world and placing therein a vicegerent to do His will. The angels object that such vicegerent who would kill, do evil and shed blood is unworthy of being created. They also contrasted such vicegerent with themselves who never swerve from fulfilling the divine will, to which God answers, 'I know something which you do not know.'¹⁴ Obviously, man would indeed do evil – that is his prerogative as a free man. But for anyone to fulfil the divine will when it is perfectly in his power to do otherwise, is to fulfil a higher and worthier portion of the divine will. The angels are ruled out precisely because they have no freedom to violate the divine imperative. Likewise, in another still more dramatic Qur'anic passage, 'God offered His trust to heaven and earth, mountains and rivers. These were struck with fear and panic and rejected the trust. But man accepted the trust and assumed its burden.'¹⁵ The trust, or divine will, which no heaven-and-earth can realize is the moral law which demands freedom of the agent necessarily. In heaven and earth, the will of God is realized with the necessity of natural law.¹⁶ It is His inalterable *summah* or pattern which, implanted in creation, causes creation to run as it does. Natural law cannot be violated by nature. Its total fulfilment is all that nature is capable of doing.¹⁷ But man, who boldly accepts the trust is capable of doing the will of God.¹⁸ Only he, therefore, of all creatures, satisfies the prerequisite of moral action, namely freedom. Moral values are more conditioned than the elemental values of nature since they presuppose them. Equally, they presuppose the utilitarian or instrumental values and stand therefore higher than either of these. Evidently, they are the higher part of the divine will which necessitated the creation of man and his appointment as the vicegerent of divinity on earth.

Because of this endowment, man stands higher than the angels, for he can do more than they.¹⁹ He can act morally, i.e., in freedom, which they cannot. Man equally shares the necessity of

natural causation in his vegetative and animal life in his physical presence as a thing among things on earth. But as the being through whom the higher part of God's will can be realized, he stands absolutely without peer. His is a cosmic vocation, a genuine *khalāfah*, or vicegerence of the divine order.

It would indeed be poor, uncoordinated work on the part of God if He had created such a cosmic creature as man without enabling him to know His will; or placed him on an earth which is not malleable enough to receive man's discharge of his ethical vocation, or on one where the doing or not-doing of that will would make no difference.

To know the divine will, man was given revelation, a direct and immediate disclosure of what God wants him to realize on earth. Wherever the revelation was corrupted, perverted, or forgotten, God has repeated the performance, taking into consideration the relativities of history, the changes in space and time, all to the purpose of keeping within man's reach a ready knowledge of the moral imperatives. Equally, man is endowed with senses, reason and understanding, intuition, all the perfections necessary to enable him to discover the divine will unaided. For that will is imbedded not only in causal nature, but equally in human feelings and relations. Whereas the former half takes an exercise of the discipline called natural science to discover it, the second half takes the exercise of the moral sense and the discipline of ethics. The discoveries and conclusions are not certain. They are always subject to trial and error, to further experimentation, further analysis and to correction by deeper insight. But, all this notwithstanding, the search is possible, and reason cannot despair of re-examining and correcting its own previous findings without falling into scepticism and cynicism. Thus, knowledge of the divine will is possible by reason, certain by revelation. Once perceived, the desirability of its content is a fact of human consciousness. Indeed, the apprehension of value, the suffering of its moving appeal and determinative power, is itself the 'knowledge' of it. For to know value is to lose one's ontological poise or equilibrium and to roll in the direction of it, that is to say, to suffer change, to begin the realization of its

ought-to-be, to fulfil the ought-to-do which issues therefrom. As the leading American empiricist, C.I. Lewis (1883-1964), used to say: 'The apprehension of value is an experience and is itself a "value-ing".'

So much for the consequences of religious experience in Islam for the theory of man. We ought now to consider the implications for soteriology and history. We have already mentioned the malleability of the world, its readiness to be informed, rekneaded, remoulded and cut so as to make it a concretization of the divine pattern. This preparation, together with the availability of revelation and the promise of a critical establishment of the divine will by reason, all render unpardonable the failure of man to fulfil his vicegerency. Indeed, fulfilment of his vocation is the only condition Islam knows for man's salvation.²⁰ Either it is his own doing or it is worthless.²¹ Nobody can do the job for him, not even God, without rendering him a puppet. This follows from the nature of moral action, namely, it is not itself, that is moral, unless it is freely willed and undertaken to completion by a free agent. Without the initiative and effort of man, all moral worth or value falls to the ground.²²

Islamic soteriology therefore is the diametrical opposite of that of traditional Christianity. Indeed, the term 'salvation' has no equivalent in the religious vocabulary of Islam. There is no saviour and there is nothing from which to be saved. Man and the world are either positively good or neutral, but not evil.²³ Man begins his life ethically sane and sound, not weighed down by any original sin, however mild or Augustinian.²⁴ In fact, he is at birth already above the zero point in that he has the revelation and his rational equipment ready for use, as well as a world all too ready to receive his ethical deed. His religious felicity (the term Islam uses is *salāh*, which comes from the root meaning 'to grow vegetation out of the earth') consists of his fulfilment of the divine imperative. He can hope for God's mercy and forgiveness, but he may not count on it while refraining from doing the divine will whether out of ignorance, laziness or blatant defiance. His fate and destiny are exactly what he himself makes them to be. God's government is just, neither favourable nor

unfavourable. Its scale of justice is absolutely that of the most precise and perfect balance. And its system of worldly and other-worldly rewards and punishments disposes for everyone, whether blest or unblest, exactly what he deserves.²⁵

Islamic religious experience had great consequences for world history. The fire of the Muslim's vision caused him to hurl himself onto the stage of history therein to effect the realization of the divine pattern his Prophet had communicated to him. Nothing was for him worthier than this cause. In its interest, he was prepared to pay the maximum price, that of laying down his life. True to its content, he regarded his stage as consisting of the whole world, of his ummah as consisting of mankind less a few recalcitrants whom he sought to bring within the fold by force of arms. His *pax Islamica*, which stood on his arms, was never conceived as a monolithic society in which Islam alone predominates. It included Jews, Christians, Sabaeans by Qur'ānic authority, Zoroastrians by Muhammadan authority, and Hindus and Buddhists by the jurists' extrapolation of that authority. The ideal remained the same, namely, a world in which, as the Qur'ān puts it, 'the divine word is supreme', and everybody recognizes that supremacy. But such recognition to be worth anything at all must be free, the deliberate decision of every person. That is why to enter into the *pax Islamica* never meant conversion to Islam, but entry into a peaceful relationship wherein ideas are free to move and men are free to convince and be convinced. Indeed, the Islamic state put all its resources at the disposal of Jewish society, Christian society, Hindu and Buddhist society, whenever these sought her authority to bring back into line with Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism any member who defied or transcended that line. The Islamic state was the only non-Jewish state where the Jew was not free to de-Judaize himself, or to rebel as a Jew against the authority of Judaism. The same applied to the Christian, Hindu or Buddhist. Whereas, up to his Emancipation in the nineteenth century, the European Jew who defied the directive of his *Bayt ha Din* could only be excommunicated – such excommunication making of him a lawless man, awaited just outside the walls of the ghetto

by the Christian state or any non-Jew to be dispossessed and killed – the oriental Jew who defied his *Bayt ha Din* was corrected by the Islamic state in the name of his rabbis. This constitutes an ultimate proof of the Muslim understanding of the divine trust as ethical.

III

The essence of religious experience in Islam, we may say in conclusion, is the realization that life is not in vain; that it must serve a purpose the nature of which cannot be identical with the natural flow of appetite to satisfaction to new appetite and new satisfaction. For the Muslim, reality consists of two utterly disparate orders, the natural and the transcendent; and it is to the latter that he looks for the values by which to govern the flow of the former. Having identified the transcendent realm as God, he rules out any guidance of action that does not proceed therefrom. His rigorous *tawhīd* (or unization of divinity) is, in the final analysis, a refusal to subject human life to any guidance other than the ethical. Hedonism, eudaemonism and all other theories which find moral value in the very process of natural life are his *bête noire*. In his view, to accept any of them is to set up other gods besides God as guide and norm of human action. *Shirk*, or association of other gods with God is really the mixing up of the moral values with the elemental and utilitarian which are all instrumental and never final.

To be a Muslim is precisely to perceive God alone (that is, the Creator, and not nature or the creature) as normative, His will alone as commandment, His pattern alone as constituting the ethical desiderata of creation. The content of the Muslim's vision is truth, beauty and goodness; but these for him are not beyond the pale of his noetic faculties. He is therefore an axiologist in his religious disciplines of exegesis, but only to the end of reaching a sound deontology, as a jurist. Justification by faith is for him meaningless, unless it is the simple introduction into the arena of action. It is there that he claims his best, as well as

his worst. For he knows that as man, he stands alone between heaven and earth with none but his axiological vision to show the road, his will to commit his energies to the task and his conscience to guard against pitfalls. His prerogative is to lead the life of cosmic danger; for no God is there to do the job for him. Not only is the job done if and when he has done it for himself, but he cannot withdraw. His predicament, if he has any by nature, is that he must carry the divine trust to complete realization or perish, as a Muslim, in the process. Surely, tragedy lurks behind every corner in his path. But that is also his pride. As Plato put it, he is 'doomed to love the good'.

Notes

1. Mircea Eliade and Joseph Kitagawa (eds.), *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), pp. 31-66.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-3. See also Institute of Islamic Studies brochures for 1952-61.
3. Another more recent discovery of the vanity of such claim was made by J.S. Trimmingsham who, after a long career in Islamic Studies as well as Christian mission to Muslim lands, wrote: 'A Christian cannot tell a Muslim what the Qur'an means' (*Two Worlds Are Ours*, Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1971, p. 161).
4. Wilfred C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1962, 1963), Chapter IV.
5. Three reasons have presented themselves to explain this Byzantine will to co-existence with Arab paganism, namely: Theological affinity involving trinitarianism, saviourism and intercessionism, and sacramentalism; lack of a will to mission promoted by interminable theological disputes; and a consuming interest in trade arrangements.
6. One should mention here that the statistical method used by Smith, and consisting of counting the incidence of the terms 'Islām' and 'Imān' in the Qur'ān, in the titles of books mentioned by Carl Brockelmann in his famous *Geschichte*, is frivolous and misleading. Classical Muslim authors were not in the habit of using either the word Islām or Imān in their titles. In Smith's calculus, however, this fact counts against them. For the picture would be radically different if one realized what the ratio is of titles using either 'Islām' or 'Imān' to those using neither. Smith says he has looked at over 25,000 titles (*The Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 298), but he omitted to tell his readers how many of these included the terms in question. He gave only the percentages of the uses.

7. Smith writes: ['Today I have completed your religion for you'] is understood by Muslims 'nowadays ... as having been revealed accordingly, at the very end of the Prophet's career, closing the exposition of Islam as a now completed system' (Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 297).

8. *Ibid.*, Vol. IX, p. 531.

9. *Al-Kashshāf 'an Haqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl* (Cairo: Mustafā al-Bābī al-Halabī, 1966), Vol. I, p. 593.

10. Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullāh al-Khaṭīb al-Iskāfī, *Durrat al-Tanzīl wa Ghurāt al-Ta'wīl* (Cairo: Muḥammad Maṭar al-Warrāq, 1909, p. 180). Here al-Iskāfī asserts: 'Falammā taqārabāt al-Lafẓatān (i.e., muslimūn and mu'minūn) wa kānatā tusta' malāni lima 'nā wahid ...'

11. Muḥammad ibn Ishaq ibn Yaṣār, *Sirat al-Nabīy Sallā Allāhu 'Alayhi wa Sallam*, recension of Muḥammad 'Abdūl Malik ibn Hishām (d. 834) (Cairo: Muḥammad Ṣubayḥ), Vol. IV, p. 1073.

12. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

13. *al-Anbiyā'* 21: 22, 29.

14. *al-Baqarah* 2: 30.

15. *al-Ahzāb* 33: 72.

16. ... 'There is no altering to God's creation. That is the right religion; though most men do not know' (*al-Rūm* 30: 30). Further elaborations of the theme may be read in *al-Baqarah* 2: 164; *Al 'Imrān* 3: 5; *al-Anfāl* 8: 3; *al-An'am* 6: 59, 95-9; *al-A'raf* 7: 54; *Yūnus* 10: 5-6, 18, 61; *Hūd* 11: 6; *al-Nahl* 16: 49; *Tā Hā* 20: 6; *al-Furqān* 25: 45-53; etc., etc.

17. 'There is no change in God's (*sunnah*) pattern of action.' (*al-Ahzāb* 33: 62; *al-Fāṭir* 35: 43; *al-Fath* 48: 23).

18. 'Whoever wills to believe, or to disbelieve, [does so of his own accord]' (*al-Kahf* 18: 29). 'God does not change the situation of any group of men until they transform their own selves' (*al-Ra'd* 13: 11). '... Whatever man has earned, he will certainly be given' (*Tā Hā* 20: 15; *al-Najm* 53: 39). Man's capacity for evil is stressed in *al-Nisā'* 4: 27; *al-Isrā'* 17: 11, 67; *Ibrāhīm* 14: 34; *al-Shūrā* 42: 48; *al-Ma'arīj* 70: 19; *'Abasa* 80: 17; *al-'Adiyāt* 100: 6; *al-'Asr* 103: 2.

19. *al-Hijr* 15: 28-30.

20. See n. 18 above. 'Whoever accepts this guidance (the Qur'ānic revelation) does so to his own merit, and whoever errs does so to his own demerit ... Teach the Qur'ān, that man may learn that it is by his own deeds that he delivers himself to ruin' (*Yūnus* 10: 108; *al-An'am* 6: 70).

21. 'On that day [the Day of Judgement] men will rise severally to be shown their own works. Then, whoso has done an atom's weight of evil will also see it returned' (*al-Zalzala* 99: 68). '[On that day] . . . As for him whose scales are heavy with good works, he will have the pleasant existence; but as for him whose scales are light, Hell will be his destination' (*al-Qi'ah* 101: 6-9).

22. '[God] does not require of any person except that of which he is capable' (*al-Mu'minun* 23: 62). 'God burdens no soul beyond its capacity. It shall have the reward it earns and it shall get the punishment it incurs . . . Our Lord, burden us not with what we have not the strength to bear' . . . (*al-Baqarah* 2: 286).

23. 'And orient yourself to the service of God, as the religion has directed. That is natural, the very nature which God had embedded within you, no change in the work (wrought) by God. That is the right religion' (*al-Rum* 30: 30).

24. A tradition of the Prophet says: 'Man is born a Muslim [considering that Islam is natural religion, *Ur-religion*]. It is his parents which Judaize or Christianize him' (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Janā'iz and Tafsīr).

25. All these principles of Islamic ethics can easily be substantiated by quotations from the Qur'ān, the supreme Islamic authority. The reader is kindly referred to the topical selections on pp. 319-37 of *The Great Asian Religions*, ed. and comp. by Chan, al-Faruqi, et al. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1969).

CHAPTER TWO

Divine Transcendence and Its Expression

Genesis and Early Development of the Idea of Divine Transcendence

The earliest 'logos' doctrine on record is that propounded by Memphite theology.¹ It states that the God Ptah thought in his heart everything in creation and then uttered his thought. The act of utterance, of expression of inner thought into outer words, is the creative act which brought about the real existence of everything. Expression in words was a creative materialization of things, including a creation of the other gods. The genesis of the world and of everything in it was a progress from divine thought to divine word, and 'every divine word came into being through that which was thought by the heart and commanded by the tongue'.² Conforming with long-standing Egyptian religious wisdom, Memphite theology did see Ptah as the power in all things. His thinking and commanding were not only the origin of the existence of everything, but equally, its sustenance and source of life, growth and energy. This notwithstanding, it was opposed – and hence, was not popular and did not survive – because it saw God (may He be Glorified and Exalted) as in some aspect prior to His creation. In other words, Memphite

¹ This article was published in Henry O. Thompson (ed.), *The Global Congress of the World's Religions* (Proceedings of 1980-82 Conference), (Washington, DC: The Global Congress of the World's Religions, Inc., 1982), pp. 267-316.

theology was rejected because of the grain of transcendence it contained. Somehow, it removed God from His creatures though He continued to act in them. The Egyptian wanted to see God in the creature, not beyond it. God, in his view, lived in nature. The ancient Egyptian was repulsed by any suggestion that removed him from God's proximity. That is why he regarded God's hierophany in nature as constitutive. He did not have to think God; he perceived Him immediately in the phenomena of nature. Wherever he turned, he could tell himself, *Voilà* God. With this givenness of God, the Egyptian mind could afford to be abstract about God's character. *Amon-Re* was characterless, unknown. 'No gods know his true shape . . . No witness is born to him. He is too mysterious for his glory to be revealed, too great for questions to be asked of him, too powerful to be known.' This enabled the Egyptian to regard God's character as genuinely numinous, i.e., as mysterious and unknowable. He beheld, rather than thought, God; and he knew Him, the God, rather than his character.

The conception of God differed radically in Mesopotamia. There, the tradition had long established God as prior to His creation. As its creator and fashioner, He stood as it were beyond it, prior to it, ontologically as well as in His efficacious animation of it. The Mesopotamian saw God in the phenomena of nature: but unlike the Egyptian, he saw the hierophany only as the occasional appearance of the God, not as constitutive. Nature was for him a carrier — one could almost say an expression — of divine power, never identified with it; e.g., Inanna and her reed. Enlil and his storm, etc. The god or goddess was never either reed or storm, though all reeds and all storms were hierophanies of them. Equally, each god had his own domain beyond which he never went. Nonetheless, his realm was never exhaustively equated with him. His divine being was different and separate from the natural phenomenon though inextricably associated with it.

Both the Egyptian and the Mesopotamian felt themselves surrounded by God on every side because nature surrounded them. However, whereas the Egyptian *perceived* the divine presence *immediately* in nature, the Mesopotamian *deduced* the

divine presence *mediately* from nature, i.e., he saw the natural phenomenon as an index which he related to the divine by an act of thought. For the Egyptian, God was *in* and *of* nature, logically equivalent to, or convertible with it, and nature was ontologically constitutive of divinity. For the Mesopotamian, God was *in* but never equivalent to or convertible with it. Abolish nature from reality: To the Egyptian, you have abolished God; to the Mesopotamian, you have made His effects imperceptible but never touched God.

The will or command of God was for the Egyptian legible in nature, just as divine nature was immediately perceivable. That is why morality was taken to be the science of nature, and its norms were called 'the teachings'. For the first time, moral investigation absolutely coincided with scientific investigation. The 'command of God' was itself the phenomenon of nature. Nature was diversity; but its diversity was merely God's idiom of expression. It was varied, while Divine nature was one and the same, an underlying unity. Since this was not the case for the Mesopotamian, he sought to understand God by characterizing Him as well as he could through observation of God's effects. Such characterizations naturally arranged themselves into groups, and produced in due course a pantheon of different characters, each of which was perceived as possessing a different set of attributes or characteristics. Marduk, the greatest god of the gods, had fifty names, all characteristics of him, and he could be worshipped by the recitation of those names. Other gods had lesser characteristics. Evidently, the characterizations of the god which have been collected after observing the god's acts in nature, and were subsequently built up into a divine personality, replace the immediately-given phenomena of nature in Egypt. Abstracting the characterizations from nature is the work of the imagination.

The Apollonian revolution in Greece which built out of the rites of fertility and appeasement a pantheon of gods and goddesses in dramatic interaction with one another, was little more than such work of the imagination. Its poeticality consists of an idealization component which differentiated it from the

empirical generalizations of science. Idealization is the rearrangement and intensification of the characteristics observed in the hierophanic phenomena of nature. In both Mesopotamia and Greece, divine transcendence consists, in abstraction from natural phenomena, i.e., in regarding God as prior to nature; and in enabling the imagination to perceive Him through such character-reading. In Greece, an additional step was taken to intensify and rearrange the characterizations, to harmonize or juxtapose them in different gods. Greece had remained closer to Egypt than to Mesopotamia by subjecting its idealization of the gods to nature. The Apollonian myth-makers have followed nature rather closely in their idealization. In consequence, their gods turned out to be personifications of the elements of nature raised to the *n* degree and rearranged so as to expose their natural individuation.

In contrast, Mesopotamia idealized in the opposite direction. Concerned with divinity's ontological difference from and priority to nature, its idealization (i.e., intensification and rearrangement) pressed away from nature. In consequence, their gods turned out to be transcending the hierophanic elements of nature and tending towards total otherness from nature. The imagination had to work harder here than in Greece, precisely because of this intensified stance from nature. The phenomena of nature lost not only the constitutive capacity they enjoyed in Egypt, but equally their capacity as indices of divinity. They became props for the imagination which carried most of the burden of perception of the divine. As a prop for the imagination, the phenomenon or element of nature enjoys a suggestive capacity whose purity is directly proportional to the transcendentalizing of the god in question. In the case of Marduk, God of Babylon, the Semitic transcendentalizing effort reached its pre-Abrahamic apogee as far as historical records give us reason to determine. The gods associated with nature have become, in the Akkadian epic of creation, *Enuma elish*, mere executives, attendants or regional governors for Marduk, the god of gods, who was elected to this post by the primordial assembly of the gods.⁴ Marduk has no association with any specific

element of nature. He is the creator of all and hence associable only with the 'whole' of creation. His characterization is the richest of all the gods: 'By his fifty names he shall be praised.' He is the absolute ruler: In his hand is the 'tablet of destinies'. His will is the law of heaven and earth; Hammurabi as well as other earthly kings are only executors of the law. They may reward the obedient and punish the violators; but ultimate justification and condemnation belong to Marduk alone.⁵

Divine Transcendence in Pre-Islam

Mesopotamia and Arabia

Religion in the Near East has always been associated with the state. Indeed, religion always provided the state's *raison d'être*. This feature of the religious life is due to the fact that all Near Eastern religion is life-affirming and world-oriented. It means to make or remake history, to remould so as to perfect nature and enable man to maximize his usufruct of it. This connection with history has been the source of corruption in religion. Human life with all its passions, differentiations and motives, its thousand-and-one relativities, is a constant temptation to alter the religion to suit the person, or particular group concerned. Hence, religion has been oscillating between purity and corruption, a stage in which the voice of prophethood speaks in clear terms what God commands and another stage in which the voices of the concerned interpret or tamper with the earlier revelation to advance their cause.

The ancient states in Mesopotamia and Diyār al-Shām (Greater Syria) rose and fell in quick succession. It was natural that the canons, definitions and imperatives of religion would also vary despite the permanent substrate of principles common to all. But especially since the middle of the second millennium BC, when the territory began to be invaded by non-Semites from the north, northeast and northwest who belonged to a radically different world-view, the pull towards a closer association of divinity with nature, increased. The gods' names,

genders and the natural elements constitutive of their hierophanies rotated among them, but the interest in them as the divinities persisted throughout, despite the change. The cities and villages of Canaan and Phoenicia, for instance, found religious satisfaction in worshipping deities (El, Ba'al, Yamm, Mot, Ashtar, Eshmun, Milkom, Milquart, etc.) which were closely associated with natural phenomena, especially those of fertility. However, they were interested in these deities as generic divine powers rather than individuals – thus reverting to a situation resembling Egypt. They showed their faithfulness to the transcendent god by recognizing, in addition to the particular gods, Ba'al, the Lord of Heaven, the Mighty Lord of all the holy gods. In Arabia, for another example, the masses found religious satisfaction with the tribal deities which pre-Islamic Arabic literature has brought to us; but they added to these, two other levels of divinities: the gods and goddesses of Makkah, and above these, Allah, the Lord and Creator of all, Who never had an image, any tribal connection or hierophanic association.

In Arabia, another fact imposes itself upon us. That is the presence of the *hanifs* whom tradition has described as strict monotheists, who rejected Arab polytheism, maintained a life of purity and righteousness, and rose above tribal loyalties. The *hanifs* were the carriers of the best in the Semitic tradition. They kept up the notion of transcendence entertained by its ancient adherents and prophets; and, it would seem, even further developed it. Their rejection of tribal and Makkan gods and their abhorrence of their images marks them as transcendentalists of the first calibre. They must be the media by which the Semitic tradition of transcendence had transmitted and perpetuated itself.

The Hebrews and Their Descendants

Biblical scholars are agreed that before the Exile, there is no evidence that the god the Hebrews worshipped was transcendent. The evidence surviving all editions of the Biblical text is

overwhelming. So many passages speak of God in the plural for 'Elohim' that a source text is assumed to have been incorporated into the scripture in which God was indeed plural. These Elohim intermarried with the daughters of men and produced offspring (*Genesis* 6: 2, 4). In another passage, God is referred to as a ghost which Jacob beheld 'face to face', wrestled with and nearly defeated (*Genesis* 32: 24–30). In a third passage (*Genesis* 31: 30–6), Laban possessed gods which Jacob's wife Rachel hid under her skirts when their owner came into her tent looking for them. The Hebrew king is declared to be the 'son of God' (*Psalms* 2: 7; 89: 26; *II Samuel* 7: 14; *I Chronicles* 17: 13, etc.) and the Hebrews, 'the sons of God' in a real sense (*Hosea* 1: 10; *Isaiah* 9: 6; 63: 14–16; etc.). The conclusion is inevitable that the Hebrew mind at that age did indeed strike a genealogical connection between the people and 'their' god which does not become invalid even by their 'a-whoring' after other gods (*Hosea* 2: 2–13). In *Deuteronomy* 9: 5–6, we read that God grants favours to the Hebrews despite their immorality and stiffneckedness, because they are 'His People' and He is bound by His promise ever to favour them. Evidently such a god was not the transcendent God known later.

That the Hebrews were content to have a non-transcendent god, is attested by the fact that as far back as their self-consciousness goes – and hence their history – the Hebrews were in some measure ethnocentrist.⁶ This particularism may well have been expressed by their notion of God as 'their father', of themselves as 'His chosen and elect'. Consequently, the nature of such a deity had to be conceived in non-transcendentalist terms. In opposition to this view, Biblical scholars point out that the Exile witnessed a great jump toward transcendence. They explain that this development was prompted by three influences. First, under the pressure for self-re-examination that crushing defeat brings, the Hebrews might have heard and listened to a pure transcendentalist view of divinity taught by the *hanifs* of Mesopotamia. Second, they may have listened to the popular transcendentalist views of the Semitic Mesopotamian and Syrian masses as well as the adherents and advocates of Zoroastrian religion. Third, their status as an element in a new world-order

about to be born through the agency of a *goy* king (Cyrus) and a *goyim* people (the Persians), might have caused them to widen the jurisdiction – and hence, the nature – of the father-god. These influences may have caused Deutero-Isaiah to reform the old Hebrew notion of God.⁷

Under the influence of Christianity and Islam which continue to the present day, Judaism made further strides towards divine transcendence. The rabbis of Palestine and Iraq in the early Christian centuries of the Muslim World, especially Spain, North Africa and Egypt, have written treatises in which God is as transcendent as the best Christian and Islamic legacy has conceived Him to be. In this regard, the writings of Mūsā ibn Maymūn (1135–1204), Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86), Ibn Gabirol (1021–58), Ibn Kammūnah, and Ibn Zakariyyā stand out among the best mankind has produced. In the contemporary scene, Abraham Heschel (1907–72), Leopold Zunz (1794–1886), and Solomon Steinheim (1789–1866) have continued the medieval tradition, presenting divine transcendence in an idiom comprehensible to modern man.

However, the basic doubt affecting divine transcendence in Judaism remains. This doubt has two causes. First, is the Jews' continuing to honour as divine revelation a scripture which is open to the foregoing critique. Second, is their doctrine of election that is biological and, by denying the relevance of religion and morality, downright unethical and indeed racist. The adherents of Reform Judaism have for the most part abandoned the view of verbatim revelation of any part of scripture. Acknowledging the validity of Biblical criticism, they maintain that the Old Testament is the record of humans' views about reality which have significance for Jews in a more intimate way than the exhortation or reports of other wise humans in history. Being human and historical, the texts of Torah, Psalms and Prophets do not escape the relativities of history and must be taken as such. This did not convince Reformed Jews that immoral election must be equally subject to historical relativity and is unworthy of modern Jews. Indeed, their rejection of the divine status of the scripture was the corollary of their doubt of the

supernatural and transformation of Judaism into an ethno-cultural identity. This ethnocentrism leaves a back door open for relating to a societal archetype who is taken to be the 'god' or 'father' of the ethnic entity. This explains the continuing use of harsh, questioning, and critical, even disrespectful language in addressing oneself to God. The rabbis of old had done it; and yet none had dared use the chastizing language of Eli Wiesel's conversations with God. Shockingly tragic, the Holocaust of Hitler certainly was. But no tragedy whatever justifies the kind of criticism Wiesel and his colleagues today address to God. That God is dead, that He abandoned His creation to Satan, that He lost His divine concern and providence cannot be said by the person who believes God to be God. At any rate, condemnation of the tragic event in no way implies its denial as a decree of God which must be acknowledged as such.

In fact, Isaiah's contribution was the identification of Jahweh with Babylon's mighty Lord of heaven and earth, who says of Himself: 'I am the Lord; and there is none else, there is no god beside me' (*Isaiah* 45: 5–6, 14, 18; 46: 9; 47: 10). Such 'growth' of Hebrew divinity united the best in Babylonian and Persian transcendentalism with the Hebrew notion of divinity. However, Isaiah's god remained bound hand and foot to 'his people' as before; and he now hurled his new powers against their enemies. If he protected and strengthened some *goyim* in the process, this was only to the end of utilizing them as puppets in the service of the only purpose he ever knew: the welfare of his own people. Isaiah's built-in ethnocentrism denied him the possibility to rise to the ethical consequences of transcendentalism. Instead of being the Prophet of Jewish transcendentalism, Isaiah accommodated the ethnocentrist god to the demands of transcendentalism required by the new age and situation. His work prevented the complete triumph of transcendentalism among the Hebrews and denied the thorough acculturation to which the Exile had exposed them. The ethical enthusiasm of Mesopotamia which caused the earthly counterpart of the cosmic state to be without frontiers and thus to envelop mankind, was incomprehensible. 'All men in the four regions of the earth'

are citizens endowed with the same rights and duties *vis-à-vis* 'the Lord of the lands', 'the first-being of all the lands'.⁸ Such thoughts must have remained utterly opaque to Isaiah.

The Christians

The early history of Christian doctrine reveals three distinct sources of influence: Judaism, Hellenism and the mystery religions.

1. *The Jewish Source*

Jesus was born a Jew and his first followers were Jews. He and they accepted the Jewish holy writings as scripture, and identified with the religious tradition of the Jews. Certainly, Jesus taught two doctrines novel to the Judaism which prevailed in his time: universalism and internalism. The first, Jesus opposed to ethnocentrism which, he thought, had corrupted the bone and marrow of the religion of God. To his mixed audience of Jews and *goyim*, Jesus said: 'All ye are brethren . . . Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your father which is in heaven. Neither be you called masters; for one is your master' (*Matthew* 23: 8-10). There is to be no discrimination between man and man, certainly not between Jews and *goyim* on account of the Jews' descendance from Abraham. Jesus not only rejected the idea that the Jews are the children of God, but that the descendance bond counted at all. The suggestion that Jesus' own relatives were entitled to any priority over other humans even when everyday matters were concerned, angered Jesus and elicited the reply: 'Who is my mother and my brethren? Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister, and mother' (*Matthew* 12: 48-50; *Mark* 3: 33-5). 'God is able of these stones to raise children unto Abraham' (*Matthew* 3: 9). God, he maintained, is good to all indiscriminately (*Matthew* 5: 44-5); and this new message is to be conveyed to 'all the nations' (*Matthew* 28: 19), for all of them are equally deserving of the new revelation.

Jewish ethnocentrism was seen by Jesus as 'shut(ing) up the kingdom of heaven against men' which, together with the Jews' custom of calling themselves the children of God, and God 'their father', he found odious and intolerable. Not only was God not their father, but that their father was the devil whose lusts they 'will do' (*John* 8: 44, 47). In fact the Jews, especially their leaders – the scribes and Pharisees – interpreters and guardians of their religious tradition, stood so condemned in Jesus' eyes that he counselled his followers: 'I say unto you, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven' (*Matthew* 5: 10). The first prerequisite of divine transcendence, namely, universalism, was affirmed by Jesus in direct opposition to Jewish ethnocentrism.⁹

Since Jesus inherited his idea of God from the Jewish tradition which he regarded as normative but in need of correction, it is reasonable to assume that for Jesus, there was but one God Who is the God of all men. 'None is good save one, that is God', he said (*Matthew* 19: 17; *Mark* 10: 18; *Luke* 18: 19). Indeed, Jesus cleansed the Godhead of any association with the Jews other than that He is their Creator, as well as the Creator of all other men. This was a great reform which Jesus introduced, calling the Jews back to the (Mesopotamian) tradition of the *hanifs*, to Semitic monotheism at its best, or the affirmation of one God as absolute, transcendent Creator and Lord of the world. It stands to reason that Jesus would care for his reform and that he would dispel any attempt at lessening or confusing the transcendence of God. Against such reasonable precaution, the evangelists ascribed to Jesus meanings contradicting divine transcendence. Although such ascription reflected the ideas of the ascriber-evangelist, not of Jesus, Christian theologians later referred to these ideas as proofs of the doctrine of the trinity.

It is alleged that Jesus called, or permitted himself to be called the 'son of man', the 'son of God', the 'Christ' and 'Lord'. This, supposedly, constitutes evidence that Jesus regarded himself worthy of worship, a second person of the trinity. 'Son of man' or *bar-nash*/*bar-Adam*, never meant in Jesus' Aramaic world any

more than a well-bred, noble man, or simply a human creature. This meaning of the expression is still held today in Hebrew, Aramaic as well as Arabic. In the Old Testament, the term was used in the Book of *Daniel* (7: 9-14) and the *Similitudes of Enoch* (37-71) in the same way, meaning moral excellence. Even in the synoptic gospels, the term does not seem to mean anything else. The very attribution of the term by the Jewish contemporaries of Jesus to all Jews, precludes *a fortiori* any understanding of it as meaning something metaphysically different from man. Indeed, in the Gospel of Mark, since Jesus was not called by that appellation except after baptism, and hence after his decision to dedicate his life to God's service, the term must have meant the same to Mark.¹⁰ It is only in John's Gospel and Paul's Epistles that 'sonship' becomes something mysterious and metaphysical.¹¹ This fact bears evidence of the foreign Greek source of the new meaning imposed upon the Hebrew/Aramaic word. At any rate, Jesus called himself 'son of man', never 'son of God'. In John's Gospel, even that concept, namely, 'the son of God', suffered another transformation as radical as the first. It became 'the only begotten son of God' (*John* 1: 14, 18; 3: 16, 18).

The term *Christos*, or anointed, meant the king or priest expected to rehabilitate the Jews and rebuild their Davidic kingdom. Though as man he is the agent or instrument of God's intervention into the processes of history, the *Christos* is through and through man. Otherwise, Isaiah would have never attributed the title to Cyrus whom nobody, not even his own subjects, mistook for anything else but human. In time, as the Isaiahian hope for rehabilitation was frustrated and the returnees failed to rebuild the Davidic kingdom, the Zoroastrian influence of eschatological messianism began to inject into the term an eschatological and hence mysterious reference. The Messiah became a human of any age yet to come but still all too human. No wonder that to Jesus, such appellation was presumptuous. He not only never accepted it but counselled his disciples against its use (*Matthew* 16: 20).

A third argument the later deifiers of Jesus bring is derived from his statement, 'I and my father are one' (*John* 10: 30). That

this statement is found only in *John* casts suspicion upon its source. At any rate, assuming its authenticity, what could Jesus have meant by it? Jesus had defined sonship of God as conformance with His will, as obedience to His commandments. 'Whosoever shall do the will of God', he held, 'the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother' (*Matthew* 12: 48-50; *Mark* 3: 33-5). Consequently, unity with God must be a spiritual communion whose only base is righteousness or virtue, doing God's will. Certainly there is a sense in which a lover can say, 'I and my beloved are one' without any implication of ontological unity, of loss of personality or fusion of individuality. To love or obey a person thoroughly, or to follow his directives, so as to make one's will totally harmonious with his, is indeed possible, nay frequent, in human experience everywhere. The same is true of the teacher-pupil, and generally of any master-disciple relationship. Here knowledge of one person by the other can reach such a degree of completeness as to warrant the claim of unity. Since the Jews had accused Jesus of violating the commandment of the Father, it was natural for him to defend himself by insisting that there is no discrepancy between him and God, that is to say, between what he says or does, and what God wishes or commands him to say or to do. To understand such unity ontologically is to mistake a spiritual meaning for the literal, to perceive a material percept in place of a poetical - in short, it constitutes evidence that the poetical imagination of the listener has not been at work.

The same misunderstanding is characteristic of the Christians' use of the terms *Kurie*, *O Kurios*, *Mar*, *Mari*, *Maran*. These terms mean master or lord, and they are attached to the demonstrative 'the' or the possessive pronoun 'my', or 'our'. Whether used by Jesus in reference to himself, or by his hearers, the term expresses his relation to a messenger sent by him whose commission is to perform the will of the sender. In this sense, any messenger-sender is a *Kurios* or master. Such is the case in *Matthew* 21: 2-3 and *Mark* 11: 2-3, when Jesus sent a disciple into a village to bring forth a colt. In all other cases, where the term is used by Jesus' disciples, it is a vocative which implies respect and honour

but not divinity, since it can be and is usually applied to any honoured man. If Paul and other men with Hellenized minds misunderstood the term as meaning God, the fact tells about them, not about Jesus. If, on this basis, Christianity holds that 'the cult of the Lord Jesus was inherent in Christianity from the beginning' and that 'the eventual formulation of an explicit doctrine of our Lord's deity as the incarnate Son of God was necessitated by the fact that it provided the only ultimate intellectual justification of such a cultus',¹² the assumption is that what some disciples thought of Jesus rightly or erroneously, is constitutive of Christianity and that it is *ipso facto* truthful of Jesus.

Another flagrant mistaking of the material for the spiritual, and hence of the literal for the poetical, is the argument between the Sanhedrin and Jesus. Anxious to prove him guilty, the Sanhedrin summoned a witness to testify that Jesus claimed he could destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. Certainly, Jesus could perform this feat in the spiritual sense, just as the statement said, 'I will build another (temple) made without hands.'¹³ Obviously, there is nothing blasphemous in such a statement, if the 'temple' is taken to mean man's relation of worship, adoration, obedience and service to God.

We may conclude from this discussion that Judaism was not a source working against divine transcendence as far as Christianity was concerned. The areas where Judaism itself compromised transcendence – namely, 'Elohim' as a class of divine beings intermarrying with men, exclusivist ethnocentrism, and racist election – did not affect Christian thinking which developed in a direction opposite to that of Judaism. The Jewish tradition merely furnished the terms which Christianity used but not before transforming their Jewish meaning and investing them with new, non-Jewish signification.

2. The Gnostic Source

For three centuries before Jesus, Palestine and the whole Near Eastern world was flooded by Hellenism, an ideology and world-view deriving from the older roots of Egyptian religion as well

as the reaction of the provinces against Greek and Roman naturalism. It crystallized in the hands of Plotinus (205–70 CE) and it exercised a tremendous influence upon the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean among whom Christianity was born.

The central thesis of agnosticism, common to all the schools to which it gave rise, is that the essence of all that is is spirit: that out of spirit it all came to be, to spirit it tends and will eventually return, matter and individuation being an aberration and evil; that at the centre of all being is an absolute spirit which is absolutely one and eternal. Gnosticism agrees with pantheism and is often at the base of any cosmology affirming the unity of all being. But the deity or absolute it affirms is the opposite of anything empirical, relative, or personal. It is this that gave gnosticism its adaptability to Judaism, Christianity and to Islam, as well as to the other religions of antiquity prevalent in the Mediterranean basin. It is responsible for the widespread simile of spirit to light and the association of the two in all that pertains to the divine and heavenly category.

As a source of Christian theology, gnosticism furnished the idea that God is wholly spirit, that He is the Creator of all that is *ex nihilo*, and that creation took place through emanations, the chief of which is that of the logos, the word, which is as thoroughly spiritual and divine as God. The opening verses of John's gospel¹⁴ bespeak pure gnosticism: and so do those of the Nicene Creed.¹⁵

These words of the Nicene Creed were themselves the words used by the gnostics for whom Jesus was 'the Word' or 'first Logos' or intelligence emanated from God. Such a logos would naturally be co-eternal with God, the Absolute, since the emanation from God is the very life and activity of God and is hence co-eternal with Him. The first Intelligence is also 'begotten not made' in the sense of emanated, not created like worldly things. It is spirit of the very same spirit as God, and hence both it and God are co-substantial, i.e., of one substance, namely, absolute spirit or divinity. Of the Logos, it is certainly true to say that it is 'Light of Light', 'true God of true God', and 'of one substance with the Father'. Neither the ideas nor the vocabulary

of agnosticism are in any way opposed to transcendence. On the contrary, the contempt in which gnosticism held matter and everything material or creaturely, and its insistence on an absolute spirit that is one and beyond all creation, make it a force working not against but for transcendence. Indeed, the whole system of emanations of the Ennead, of logoi coming serially one after another while keeping their common substantiality, was designed in order to solve the problem of matter and plurality (i.e., creation) proceeding out of spirit and unity (i.e., God). The nearest that gnosticism came to non-transcendence is its association of God, the spirit and the logoi with light and the lights of heaven. But it must be borne in mind that for their earlier century, the sun was not merely a ball of hot gases, nor the moon a cold mass of black rock and dust. They were heavenly lights at which the soul of man never stopped wondering. 'Light' is the fascination of human consciousness; not the waves of energy of the physicist. By identifying Jesus with the Logos, Gnosticism sought to digest the novel Christian movement, while keeping its notion of divine transcendence intact. That is why all gnostic Christians held tenaciously to the above-mentioned part of the Nicene Creed and dispelled the historical creaturely Jesus, along with his crucifixion and whole career on earth as a 'phantasm.'

The Docetists' principle: 'If he suffered, he was not God; if he was God, he did not suffer'¹⁶ – is a perfect summary of the gnostic position *vis-à-vis* the threat to transcendence posed by the Christians. So is the famous statement of Arius (250–336 CE): 'God always, the Son always; at the same time the Father, at the same time the Son; the Son co-exists with God, unbegotten (in the sense of created); he is ever-born-by-begetting (in the sense of emanated); neither by thought nor by any moment of time does God precede the Son; God always, Son always; the Son exists from God Himself.'¹⁷ Saturninus elaborated the position beautifully. Identifying the logoi also as angels, virtues or attributes of the spirit, he said: 'There is one Father, utterly unknown (i.e., transcendent) who made Angels, Archangels, Virtues and Powers . . . The Saviour . . . is unborn, incorporeal and without form . . . He was seen as a man in appearance only.'¹⁸

More clearly, Basilides said: 'Mind (logos) was first born of the unborn Father, then Reason from Mind, from Reason – Prudence, from Prudence – Wisdom and Power . . . The Unborn and Unnamed Father sent his First-begotten Mind – and this is he they call Christ – for the freeing of them that believe in him from those who made the world . . . And he appeared to the nations of them as a man on the earth . . . wherefore he suffered not, but a certain Simon, a Cyrenian, was impressed to bear his cross for him; and Simon was crucified in ignorance and error, having been transfigured by him that men should suppose him to be Jesus . . . If any therefore acknowledge the crucified, he is still a slave and subject to the power of them that made our bodies; but he that denies him is freed from them, and recognizes the ordering of the Unborn Father.'¹⁹ In fact, gnosticism was fighting desperately to save transcendence from certain ruin by dedicated forces. Who and what were these anti-transcendence forces? By nature, gnosticism was a view which appealed to the refined mind. It required an intelligence capable of grasping its abstract doctrine. Obviously, it was not a religion for the masses. Its metaphysics were too spiritual and lofty for the plebeian mind. The latter could understand and revel in the concrete, the material. If the material has a spiritual aspect to it which ennobled it and made it more respectable, all the better. But such an ideal cannot lose touch with the material world without losing its appeal. Christian gnosticism was hence hereticated and defeated by those incapable of rising to the lofty spheres it presented. These insisted on a real, historical, concrete human Jesus Christ whom they asserted along with the divine, eternal and spiritual logos. Little did they care that the creaturely human Jesus dealt a death blow to the transcendence of the divine logos.

3. The Mystery Religions' Source

The third source of Christianity was the mystery religions of antiquity. These religions came on the heels of decaying Greek and Mesopotamian religions which in their last years were mixed with primitive Roman religion and with Manichaeism and

Mithraism, respectively. Some influence from Egypt through the Isis and Osiris cults was also added to the scene, presenting a vast array of cults and views of the world.

The elements common to nearly all these cults and views were a reflection of the general deterioration of world order, of the imperial states that had hitherto controlled it. A general moral and religious scepticism dominated the atmosphere as the public scene was shot through with corruption, egotism, crass materialism and hedonism and power politics, while the masses were immersed in poverty, disease and a miserable existence as puppets of generals and demagogues. The cults divided the masses, as they catered to their basic human needs in an hour of dying civilizations. First, was the need for a god to assume the burden of one's existence with which the individual could neither bear nor cope. Such a god, it seemed to them, would fulfil his function best by undergoing an expiatory death. Only in this way could the overwhelming feeling of guilt gnawing at their soul be relieved. Second, the need for abundant life expressed in rites of fertility aimed at reassuring man of the promise of children, crops and animals. Third, was the need for a general restoration of society to a past felicity which was lost in the age of decline. The eschatological projection filled the imagination with the desiderata of the deprived masses and half-satisfied their yearning for justice, for loving concern and well-being.

The cults of Osiris, Adonis and Mithras seemed best suited to answer all these needs at once. They were all sacramental, offering the worshipper personal catharsis through participation in the death of the god, effected symbolically by immolating a bull or goat, and by drinking its blood or a substitute (some juice, bread, milk, honey or wine). The participation was equally in the god's resurrection which cheered and reassured the worshipper with a good harvest in the autumn, and with plentiful animal offspring and resurgent nature in the spring. Initiation into the faith was carried out by a baptism in water, performed by the priests of the cult called 'fathers'. All of these sacraments passed to Christianity with such little change that, at the time Christianity

contended with these cults for the souls of men, it seemed to Tertullian (c. 160–c. 220) as if 'the devil himself had inspired a parody of the Christian sacraments'.

Above all, the mystery cults of the ancient world provided man with a god on which he could have a hold. The god was individuated enough to be a person, born hierophanically by a real bull or goat or pig, physically slaughtered, and physically consumed, or symbolically by means of real substitutes, identified with the forces of nature, the dying with winter and the resurrection with spring. The sacraments, with their principle of *ex opere operato*, gave the worshipper a guaranteed result. The catharsis they caused was real and felt whenever the faith was candid and the need was itself real. The myth was not demythologized, i.e., seen as myth; but believed in literally, i.e., seen as really and concretely true. Because of the elaborate rituals (*dromena*) which often extended over several days and involved bathing, shaving, eating, sleeping, strenuous exercises, as well as orgies, the language used in connection with the rituals was capable of being taken literally as well as metaphorically. When the Mithraic votary was finally brought before the gods, he could say: 'I am your fellow wanderer, your fellow star', and the Orphic: 'I am the child of Earth and of the starry Heaven. I too am become god.'²⁰ Apuleius²¹ tells of his participation in the rites of Isis: 'I approached the very gates of death and set one foot on Perserpine's threshold, yet was permitted to return, rapt through all elements. At midnight, I saw the sun shining as if it were noon. I entered the presence of the gods of the underworld and the gods of the upper world, stood near and worshipped them.' After shaving his head, fasting and abstaining for ten days, he was 'admitted to the nocturnal orgies of the great god and became his illuminate (*principalis dei nocturnos orgiis in lustratus*). Lucius then reports that 'now he (i.e., the god) deigned to address me in his own person, with his own divine mouth'.²² In every sense, the experience was both empirical and spiritual.

This is a far cry from the transcendent unitary God of Semitic religion Whose adoration and worship is a purely spiritual exercise, carried out without sacrament, with no operative

dromena, and whose language is immediate and direct. The language of Semitic worship may carry a metaphor or simile; but it never points to any empirical reality or thing, and allows no more place to imagery than is needed to move the poetical imagination on its flight. Naturally, the transcendence aspect of this religion had to change if the religion was to be adopted. The mind accustomed to sacramental religious practice is ill adapted to the kind of abstraction which the worship of the transcendent God demands. And it is precisely this consciousness presupposed by these mystery religions which continued into Christianity as it travelled from the Semitic East to the Hellenistic West.⁴¹ The sacraments, with the human needs to which they catered, constituted the underlying substratum: Above all, baptism or the rite of *praefatus deum veniam*,⁴² and the Eucharist, where the worshipper participates in the death and resurrection of the god. The god is wished dead and resurrected signifying a genuine *natalis sacrorum* or religious rebirth for him.

The names and personalities were a façade which changed without affecting the substance of the sacraments or their underlying doctrine. The crucified Jesus stepped into the place of the immolated god, and the doctrine was given the emendations necessary for the new religious ideology. It was the ethics, not the theological doctrine, that changed radically from over-indulgent hedonism to severe asceticism and self-renunciation. It was here that the revolution had taken place. Life – and world-affirmation became life – and world-denial. But here, in the field of the moral imperative, the question of divine transcendence was irrelevant. Indeed, what Christianity had inherited from Judaism was twisted around to suit the Hellenistic consciousness: The Hebrew scriptural descriptions of the deity, written by and for a Semitic mind, were shorn of their poetry and taken literally to support the doctrinal elements of Christianity.

Nothing is more reflective of this fact than the use Christian theologians have made of Hebrew Scripture to justify the notion of the trinity and thus establish the divinity of Jesus. The book, *De Trinitate*, gives evidence that practically every quotation St.

Augustine (d. 604) took from Hebrew scripture in support of the trinity was misunderstood by his Hellenistic mind. As a Christian Hellene, Augustine was incapable of understanding the Semitic way of talking about God.⁴³ Augustine's way of arguing for the Trinity was not the unique literalism of an unpoetic mind. It has characterized the history of Christian theology to the present day. Before Augustine, Tertullian sought to deduce the trinity from the plural 'us' of [*Genesis* 3: 22];⁴⁴ and sixteen centuries later, Karl Barth (1886–1968) tells us that the plural form of that same passage is evidence that God is a trinity, that one person, the Father, consulted with the other two, the Son and the Holy Spirit and jointly decided to make man in Their/His image.⁴⁵ The plural pronouns used by God (*Genesis* 3: 22; 11: 7; *Isaiah* 6: 8, etc.) are a stumbling block for Barth's Western mind which is so literalist as to affirm maleness and femaleness in the Godhead because of *Genesis*' assertion in the same passage 'male and female created He them' following 'And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him' (*Genesis* 1: 27).

Barth's thought moves from man to God and constitutes a flagrant case of anthropomorphism. 'Could anything be more obvious', he argues in support of his view, 'than to conclude from this clear indication that the image and likeness of the being created by God signifies . . . juxtaposition and confrontation . . . of male and female, and then to go on to ask . . . in what the original and prototype of the divine existence of the Creator consists?'⁴⁶ It is crude, to say the least, to suggest that, granted the nature of God is trinitarian, the relationship between the divine persons of the trinity is that of 'begetting' and 'bearing children'.⁴⁷

The case is not limited to those key sentences of the Old Testament which Christians have adduced as evidence for the trinity. It extends to those of the New Testament which are ascribed to Jesus and supposed to tell his idea of himself. 'I and my Father are one', 'I am the way', 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father', 'You say so' said in response to the question, 'Are you the Messiah?', etc. were all interpreted literally by Christians. The same words, taken in their Aramaic original

which Jesus spoke, and hence under the categories of a Semitic consciousness, would not furnish the evidence the Christian seeks. All of them impress me as ordinary statements of common parlance which can be heard even today in Arabic a hundred times a day in any village market place. Nobody would take them to mean what the Christian Hellenic theologians have claimed. This observation applies to those New Testament statements pertinent to the nature of Jesus which are ascribed to the disciples, such as their addressing him as 'Lord', and seeking forgiveness of their sins at his hand, etc.

Contemporary theologians, anxious to speak to moderns but still standing within the mainstream of Christian thought, continue to affirm the same thesis, though in differing terms. Led by Paul Tillich (1886-1965), and generally affected by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), they want to keep both transcendence as well as the historical (empirical, natural, human) reality of Jesus. Hence they arbitrarily assume that the transcendent God, like the 'Brahman principle',³⁰ or the 'philosophical absolute',³¹ is forever unknown and unknowable unless He is concretized in some object of nature and history.³² Tillich asserts that such 'concrete element in the idea of God cannot be destroyed',³³ and that, while polytheism - as affirmation of a divine concrete - will always tend towards transcendence, there can be no absolute monotheism.³⁴ Where absolute monotheism is declared, God, as absolute 'monarch' over hosts of powers, angels, etc., will 'always be threatened by revolution or by outside attack' like any other 'absolute monarchy' on earth; or, as in the case of 'mystical monotheism', where 'the ultimate transcends all', God remains as abstract (God = X) and man's craving for the empirical divine continues. 'This most radical negation of the concrete element in the idea of God', he writes, 'is not able to suppress the quest for concreteness'.³⁵ And in order to pave the road for the apotheosis of Jesus, Tillich went on to contradict himself by asserting that logically 'mystical monotheism does not exclude divine powers in which the ultimate embodies itself temporarily'.³⁶ Obviously, Tillich here has discarded the philosophical stance - and contradicted his earlier definitions of absolute

monotheism. In order to accommodate dictates of Christian dogma, he allowed himself to make untenable assertions about God as well as man. For, it is not true that transcendence is incapable of suppressing the quest for the concrete, just as it is not true that chastity and purity are incapable of suppressing the desire for other women. The presence of desire for other women does not make adultery a virtue. Neither is desire always and necessarily present. Tillich has here followed the Hindu illuminati who tolerated the crudest paganism and polytheism 'for the masses of the people who are unable to grasp the ultimate in its purity and abstraction from everything concrete, (as) history . . . in India and in Europe has shown'.³⁷

Having decided, therefore, like Tertullian, Irenaeus (c. 130-c. 200) and Augustine, that Christianity must have both the transcendent God it inherited from Judaism and Hellenism, and the concrete God, he had to make recourse to acrobatics to explain how the two can be kept in consciousness and expressed in thought. For this a new signification for myths and symbols became necessary; as they were the only tools with a sufficiently mercurial nature to accommodate the paradox.³⁸ Myth, symbols and parables, it is claimed, are 'the proper language of religion . . . where God is the chief actor and where the story is symbolically true, i.e., will appear to be true (if the standpoint is that of) the religion to which one subscribes'.³⁹ God, it is claimed, is immanently present in myths and symbols, as their meaning on a secondary level. But that is not merely an ideational referent which the mythical terms signify. It is ontological. 'Jesus', the 'Word of God', is not merely an attribute of the transcendent God signifying love and mercy and concern; for 'when the Word becomes flesh, myth becomes history'.⁴⁰

Evidently, Christian thought has not yet outgrown its linkage to the mystery religions. What it digested of Judaism is a historical figurization, a context, as historians of religions would say. What it digested of Hellenism is a cosmetic superstructure which gives it pomp and circumstance. In its rock-bottom essence, the core of its religious content, it remains true to the mystery religions with their immanent god dispensing his mana of holiness and

salvation through the catharsis which participation in the sacraments brings. Here, transcendence is a decorative notion, inexpressed and inexpressible except when it assumes the modality of the concrete. Here, as Miles (1907–91) said, the proper religious expression is 'silence qualified by parable' and myths.⁴¹ Here, finally, the myth is false – taken literally, ideationally true – taken figuratively, and empirically true – taken as symbol of the immanent God present therein – a treble-tiered paradox!

Since this was the state of 'God's transcendence' in Christianity, the language expressing it was equally improper. Although Christians never ceased to claim that God is transcendent, they spoke of Him as a real man who walked on earth and did all things men do including the suffering of the agonies of death. Of course, according to them, Jesus was both man and God. They never took a consistent position on Jesus' humanity or divinity without accusation of apostasy and heresy. That is why their language is always confusing, at best. When pinned down, every Christian will have to admit that his God is both transcendent and immanent. But his claim of transcendence is *ipso facto* devoid of grounds. To maintain the contrary, one has to give up the laws of logic. But Christianity was prepared to go to this length too. It raised 'paradox' above self-evident truth and vested it with the status of an epistemological principle. Under such principle, anything can be asserted and discussion becomes idle. Finally, the Christian may not claim that the Trinity is a way of talking about God; because, if the Trinity discloses the nature of God better than unity, a greater plurality would do the job better. At any rate, to reduce the 'Holy Trinity' to a status of *in percipi* is heretical as it denies *una substantia* as metaphysical doctrine.

Divine Transcendence in Islam

The Human Capacity to Understand

The first point to bear in mind is that Islam does not tolerate any discrimination between humans as far as their capacity to

understand the transcendence of God is concerned. Divine transcendence is everybody's business; and in Islam it is the ultimate base of all religion, and all anthropology. Unlike the Hindus and Paul Tillich who, by their reserving of transcendence to the intelligentsia, open the road wide for polytheism and pagan practices, Islam holds all humans naturally – and hence necessarily – endowed with a *fitrah*, i.e., an innate *sensus communis*, by which to understand that God is, that He is One, and that He is transcendent. 'Hold fast, therefore, to the true religion like a *ḥanīf*, which is the natural endowment with which all humans have been endowed. In this respect, there is no variety in God's creation of humans. That is the worthy religion' (*al-Rūm*, 30: 30).

There is no excuse for denying transcendence or compromising it. Two avenues have been provided for mankind by God through which to recognize the transcendent God. First, He in His mercy, has sent revelation to every people on earth to teach them that the transcendent God is and that they owe Him worship and service. 'There is no people but We have sent them a warner . . .' (*al-Fāṭir* 35: 24; *al-Furqān* 25: 51). 'We have sent no messenger but to clarify Our message to his people in their own tongue' (*Ibrāhīm* 14: 4) and 'We have sent no messenger but commanded him that none is to be worshipped except God and that evil is to be shunned' (*al-Naḥl* 16: 36).

Second, including the cases where the revelation has been corrupted beyond recognition, there is the universal road of the *sensus communis*, open to all humans. Any exercise of this faculty will, if carried out with candidness and integrity, lead to the cognition of the transcendent God. For, as the Qur'ān has put it, every human is endowed with the capacity to know Allah. That is his birthright. To explain and clarify the point in detail, Islamic thinkers invented the story of Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān (The Living, Son of the Awake) who grew up on a deserted island devoid of humans and hence of tradition, and who gradually led himself by sheer intellectual effort from ignorance, to naïve realism, to scientific truth and finally, to natural reason and the discovery of transcendent God.⁴²

The *sensus communis* which Islam recognizes is different from the sense of the holy of Rudolph Otto (1869–1937) and the historians of religions. The sense by which humans discern the holy or numinous quality of reality is certainly acknowledged. Islam, in other words, agrees with their definition of man as *homo religiosus*; but it adds to it the sense for divine transcendence and holds that without it the numinous reality recognized in religion would not be ultimate. For it may well be pluralistic as in polytheism, and/or naturalistic as in the Egyptian and mystery religions, but not ultimate. Ultimacy requires *tawhīd*, i.e., unization and transcendence of the deity. As the Qur'ān put it: i.e., 'If God had associates, they would have sought His throne. Praised and glorified be He, far beyond what they claim . . . If there were more than one God in heaven and earth, cosmic order would have collapsed' (*al-Isrā'* 17: 42–3; *al-Anbiyā'* 21: 22). Tillich's remark is true but only where the other beings are declared divine. Where God alone is divine, and all other beings including angels, demons, spirits, humans and all else, are creatures of God, there can be no threat to His position or authority. Therefore only a transcendent God can fulfil the idea of reason we call God. The question of ultimacy cannot rest with intermediate or plural gods. Only one God can be ultimate. If He is, He must be transcendent, i.e., beyond all else. Otherwise, His ultimacy cannot be maintained.

This is the first assertion of the Islamic creed that, 'There is no God but God', which the Muslim understands as denial of the existence of any other gods. It is equally a denial of any associates to God in His rulership and judgship of the universe, as well as a denial of the possibility of any creature to represent, personify or in any way express the divine being. The Qur'ān says of God that, 'He is the Creator of heaven and earth Who creates by commanding the creature to be and it is . . . He is the One God, the Ultimate . . . (*al-Baqarah* 2: 117, 163). There is no God but Him, ever-living, ever-active (*Āl 'Imrān* 3: 2). May He be glorified *beyond* any description! (*al-An'ām* 6: 100) . . . no senses may perceive Him (*al-An'ām* 6: 103) . . . praised be He, the Transcendent Who greatly transcends all claims and reports about

Him' (*al-Isrā'* 17: 43). In fulfilment of this view, the Muslims have been all too careful never to associate in any manner possible, any image or thing with the presence of the divine, or with their consciousness of the divine and in their speech and writing about the divine, never to use anything except Qur'ānic language, terms and expressions which, according to them, God had used about Himself in the Qur'ānic revelation.

Transcendence in language was maintained by Muslims around the globe despite their speaking all sorts of languages and dialects and belonging to all sorts of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This was the objective of the Qur'ānic dicta, 'We (God) have revealed it in an Arabic Qur'ān (*Yūsuf* 12: 2; *Tā Hā* 20: 113) . . . We have sent it (the revelation) down an Arabic judgement (*al-Ra'd* 13: 39) . . . We have revealed it in the Arabic tongue (*al-Zumār* 39: 28; *Fuṣṣilat* 41: 3; *al-Shūrā* 42: 7; *Zukhruf* 43: 3) . . . it is We Who sent down the Qur'ān; We Who shall safeguard it; We Who shall collect it; We Who shall explain it' (*al-Qiyāmah* 75: 16–17). Abiding by these dicta, Muslims treated only the Arabic original as the Qur'ān and regarded the translations as mere aids to understanding it, not as text. Liturgical use of the Qur'ān could be made only in Arabic. *Ṣalāt*, the institutionalized worship, kept the form it was given by the Prophet on divine instruction. Moreover the Qur'ān gradually moulded the consciousness of the non-Arabic speaking converts and furnished the categories under which religious matters could be thought out and religious feelings could be expressed. Any God-talk by Muslims became exclusively Qur'ān-talk, adhering scrupulously to the Arabic categories of the Qur'ān, to its Arabic terms, its Arabic literary forms and expressions.

How did the Qur'ān express transcendence? It gave 99 or more names for God expressing His lordship of the world, and His Providence in it; but it emphasized the 'Nothing is like unto Him' (*al-Shūrā* 42: 11). Anything belonging to His realm or associated with it – like His words, His time, His light, etc. – the Qur'ān described as something to which empirical categories cannot apply. 'If all trees were pens and all seas were ink with which to record God's speech', it asserted, 'they would

be exhausted before God's speech runs out' (*al-Kahf* 18: 109). 'A day with God is like a thousand years of man's' (*al-Hajj* 22: 47). 'The Light of God is that of heaven and earth. Its likeness is the light of a lamp whose glass is a celestial star, whose fuel is from a blessed olive tree that is neither of the East nor of the West, incandescent without fire . . .' (*al-Nūr* 24: 35). Thus, empirical language – figures and relations from the world – are used; but with the unmistakable denial that they apply to God *simpliciter*.

The Human Capacity to Misunderstand

Having asserted that humans are all endowed with the capacity to recognize the transcendent God, Islam does not assert that they all must have in fact achieved such recognition. In the terms of a *ḥadīth* (tradition) of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), 'Every man is born a Muslim (in the sense of nature, or a *Sollensnothwendigkeit* for recognizing Allah). But it is his parents (or nurture, tradition and culture) that Judaize or Christianize him.' Departure from this primordial, innate monotheism, is the work of culture and history. Its sources are passion and culture; the former, when vested interest in a view elevates it to the status of dogma, of an article beyond contention; the latter, when the student disciple or seeker's nerve fails in the *épêche* requisite for grasping a truth not under the categories of his own culture. The first is evidenced by the reply of Heraclitus (fl. 500 BC) to the Prophet's emissary who called him to Islam.⁴³ The second, in the problems early Islamic thought had contended with relating to the divine attributes.

Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians have entered Islam in its early days and brought with them the mental categories of their inherited cultures. The majority did not speak Arabic. Naturally, their minds, accustomed to thinking in terms of divine immanence, particularism and concreteness, could not readily absorb the radical idea of divine transcendence. They understood Allah in the only way they were accustomed to, i.e., anthropomorphically. They were called *Mushabbihah*.⁴⁴ They took

the Qur'ānic descriptions of God literally, and fell into the unanswerable abyss of questions regarding divine nature. If as the Qur'ān says, God spoke to the Prophets and angels, then He must have a mouth and tongue! And if He sees and hears, He must have eyes and ears! And if He sat on the throne, or descended from it, then He must have a body and a posture. Al-Shahristānī (d. 1153 CE) following al-Ash'arī (d. 935 CE), tells us that the *Mushabbihah* (anthropomorphists) namely, Muḍar, Kuhmūs, Aḥmad al-Hujaymī, Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam, Muḥammad ibn 'Isā, Dawūd al-Jawāribī and their followers held that God could be interviewed and embraced; that He visits people and is visited by them; that He has organs like and unlike those of humans; that He has hair, etc. They even falsely ascribed to the Prophet sayings confirming their claims. Al-Shahristānī took care to inform his readers that most of these claims were adopted from the teachings of Jews – Qara'ites – and singled out *ḥadīths* pertinent to the creation of Adam in God's image, to God's regret for the Deluge, His development of an eye-ache of which He was relieved by the angels, etc.

The Mu'tazilah were the first to rise to the threat this anthropomorphism posed for Islam. In their enthusiasm, they shot at and beyond the target at the same time. The divine attributes, they said, were of the nature of literary similes which must be interpreted allegorically and their abstract meaning extracted. That God spoke is an allegorical way of saying that revelation has been conveyed to man; that He sees and hears means that He has knowledge; that He sits on the throne means that he has power; etc. This was sufficient to refute anthropomorphism and cut it out from the Islamic tradition once and for all, but it created the danger of *ta'tīl*, i.e., of neutralizing the attributes or 'stopping their functioning as attributes'.⁴⁵

Allegorical interpretation is based on the principle that words have a double meaning: one that is conventionally agreed upon as signifying a thing, quality, event or state with which the audience is traditionally and universally familiar; and another that is not conventionally known or found in the lexicography of the language, but is assigned to it by the author. By so doing, the

author creates a novel meaning and makes the word in question its carrier. This additional charge may be quite different from the conventional one. Indeed, it may even be its opposite. It is always factitive, inseparable from the context in which it is made, and comprehensible only to its author or to the person initiated into it. Speaking, writing or interpreting allegorically is extremely dangerous because, by definition, it has no rules. Once the words of language are shaken loose from the meanings which lexicography has attached to them, nothing can stop anybody from investing them with any other meanings. Exegesis, or the reading of meanings into words not lexicographically associated with them, ruins any text it attacks. It transvaluates its values, transforms its categories, and transfigures its meanings. Greek religion and civilization came to an end when the lexicographic meanings of the words of Homer (8th Century BC) were knocked out in favour of allegorical interpretation. Ideological chaos broke loose and a process of general scepticism became impossible to avert. The same was true of Hebrew scripture when Philo (2nd Century BC) of Alexandria imposed upon the text a whole new layer of meanings by the same method, forcing the rabbis to cling to the letter with the strictest conservatism in order to save the faith from total ruin, and opening the gates for the Jews to grow out of their faith with a good conscience. Philo's exegetical interpretation was the very process which helped graft the new Christianist ideology onto the stump of Judaism and its scripture. The Qur'ān and especially the Islamic doctrine of God were open to the same dangers, and had to be safeguarded. In another dimension, allegorical interpretation of the Qur'ānic attributes of God created the possibility of an abstraction process which, as in the case of Hinduism and what Tillich called 'mystical monotheism', cannot be stopped until it reaches the = X, or the Absolute Void of the philosophers, and there rests in silence. Such = X can never satisfy the demand of religious consciousness for a transcendent, active, living, personal and purposive God.

Hence, Mu'tazilāh doctrine was only an intermediate step in the development of Islamic thought, and al-Ash'arī rose to the

task of bringing their interlude to a close. He began his career as one of their members but soon realized the dangers of their position, left their ranks and countered their claims. The divine attributes, he said, are true as they stand in the Qur'ān, because they are the word of God about Himself, thus countering *ta'tīl* with the common sense meanings of the Qur'ānic terms and the faith that these words are from God. This need not lead to anthropomorphism automatically. Al-Ash'arī's analysis showed that anthropomorphism derived not from the affirmation of the common sense meanings of the Qur'ānic terms, but from the attempt to give empirical answers to questions seeking 'to explain how the attributes qualify God'. Hence, he reasoned, if this question pertaining to the 'how' of predication or attribution were avoided, anthropomorphism would be ruled out. Hence the breakthrough is to declare the question 'how' addressed to the divine attributes uncritical and illegitimate. 'The divine attributes', he argued, 'are neither He nor not-He'. 'Neither He' negates anthropomorphism; and 'nor not-He' negates *ta'tīl*.

Tashbīh (anthropomorphism) is false; and so is *ta'tīl* (neutralization of the attributes through allegorical interpretation of them). The former is contradictory to transcendence; the latter to the fact of the Qur'ān's predication of the attributes to God, which is tantamount to denying the revelation itself. The solution of the dilemma, al-Ash'arī reasoned, was *first*, in accepting the revealed text as it is, i.e., as one whose meaning is anchored in the lexicography of its terms; and *second*, in rejecting the question, 'How the common sense meaning is predicable to the transcendent being' as illegitimate. This process, he called '*bilā kayfa*' (without how).

Al-Ash'arī's audience understood perfectly and approved, certain that a grasp of the attribute *bilā kayfa* was not only possible, but that it was safe from the twin dangers of anthropomorphism and allegorical interpretation. The former is inevitable if the question of the how of predication of the attribute is raised in expectation of an answer similar to that analyzing the relation of predicate to subject in the empirical world. Since the subject is transcendent, the question is invalid. Underlying this principle

was the realization that the lexicographic meaning of the attribute was to be maintained but only in a suggestive capacity. Affirming the divine attribute without how achieves this much. The purpose of lexicographic meaning, however, is to set the imagination on a certain course in comprehending, not to predetermine the end-object of comprehension. Lexicographic meaning gives us positive elements within the course or beam of comprehension, and it does provide walls or banks for channelling its progress so as not to be mixed up with meaning-courses other words set up. Both its inclusionary and exclusionary functions are necessary and fruitful. But once on its predetermined course, the imagination may proceed, either stopping at its end-object in nature, or continuing *ad infinitum*, under the demand of an idea of reason, in the Kantian sense of the term. The course or beam of meaning does not lead to the dark abyss, or to silence, but to something positive, though not of nature. An intuition of transcendent reality is possible precisely at the point where the imagination is 'beamed' on to a course, runs on that course as far as it can until it arrives at the realization that the course is infinite and that it can sustain itself no longer. Therefore, the mind perceives the impossibility of empirical predication while the understanding is still anchored to the lexicographic meaning of the term. For the intuition of transcendent reality is an intuition of infinity gained at the very moment of consciousness when the imagination declares its own impotence to produce the same. The lexicographic meaning of the term serves as an anchor while the imagination soars in search of an applicable modality of the meaning in question, a modality that is *ex hypothesi* impossible to reach. Indeed, the Qur'an likens the word of God to a 'tree whose roots are firm in the ground, but whose branches are infinite and unreachable in the skies above' (Ibrāhīm 14: 24).

*The Expression of Divine Transcendence
in the Visual Arts*

Greco-Roman antiquity has known the principle of deification through idealization. By this process, the concrete (a

human person or object of nature) was separated from its individual instance or concretization, for the purpose of intensifying its qualities. When these qualities had reached the ultimate degree possible, the object was presented as that which nature ought to have produced and wished to produce, but which it failed to produce through its stammering and one thousand and one attempts. In those attempts it may have succeeded but only partially. Art is abler than nature; in that the artist can produce but always failed to do so. The work of art therefore is not an imitation of nature as Plato (c. 428–c. 348 BC) had charged; nor is it an empirical generalization from what is given in nature. It is *a priori*, and hence transcendent or divine, inasmuch as it is the product of an idealization process carried out to the ultimate degree.

The gods of Ancient Greece were not transcendent realities, utterly and ontologically other than nature. They were the product of the same idealization process carried out by human genius. They were human, all too human, desiring, faltering, hating, loving, plotting and counter-plotting against one another, representing every facet of the human personality, every force of nature, of which they were the ultimate idealization. When the sculptor represented them in marble, or the poet in dramatic self-disclosure, any person who understood the stammering language of nature would exclaim: Yes, that is just what nature meant to say! This is naturalism and classical antiquity was the best exemplar of it. It is therefore misleading to speak of transcendence in Greco-Roman antiquity. One had better speak of immanence. Immanence requires the natural, the concrete and empirical because it is a dimension of it. It does not shun the concrete because it is an idealization of the natural; and without the natural it cannot be reached. That is also why the art of Greece and Rome is figurative; and the rendition of specific figures in art, or portraiture, is at its best.

It was in the Renaissance that Europe rediscovered the artistic legacy of antiquity and re-appropriated it after a millennium. During those one thousand years, Christendom laboured under a composite, ambiguous aesthetic which combined elements of

the Greek legacy with some elements of the Semitic. The result was Byzantium whose art never rose beyond that of illustration. The forte of Byzantine art, namely, the icon, was unnaturalistic in form (hence Semitic, following its Judaic inheritance) and naturalistic in content by virtue of the discursive ideas it expressed in the figures or directly in the catch-words or titles assigned to the figures by the artist. This Semitic element was tossed out by the Renaissance artists who produced images of Jesus, Mary, the Father and the saints conveying the Christian meanings assigned to them, directly through the figures themselves, in the style of Ancient Greece.

Although the authorities of Christianity first condemned this naturalism as a return to paganism, they were finally reconciled to it by virtue of the connection of divinity with nature implicit in the incarnation. Since then, Christendom's art has been in the main figurative and idealizational. Obviously, this was found satisfactory because transcendence in the Christian mind never made demands which figurative art could not meet.

It was otherwise with the Muslim mind which asserted an absolute transcendence of the Godhead. This could not be reconciled in any way with permissive immanence which tolerated expression of the divine in figures because God was not 'other' than the natural, but its ultimate idealization. The ultimate reality with which the Muslim is preoccupied, by which he is obsessed, whose will he is always seeking to discover, whose command he is always striving to obey, and whose mention is on his lips morning till evening with almost every sentence, is a transcendent reality whose essence and definition is that it is other than the whole of creation. Standing on creation's other side, such 'totally other' is unrepresentable by anything in creation. Rather than give up for this very reason the whole attempt of aesthetics as the Jews have done, claiming that divine transcendence leaves no room for the visual arts, the Muslim artist accepted the visual arts and assigned to them the first task of proclaiming that nature is not an artistic medium.

Both stylization and idealization transform the natural and the concrete. But whereas idealization transforms so as to make the

thing more natural, more representative of its genus, stylization transforms so as to deny the concrete as well as its genus. Stylization transforms nature in such a way as to negate its naturalness. The stylized figure only suggests that of which it is the figure. The figure has been emptied of its content and remains a shell whose use is to express the negation. The same is true of human and animal figures, of the vine, leaf and flower throughout the arts of Islam. Their stylization is the Muslim artist's way of saying No! to nature, to its concrete instance as well as to its ideal form. That nothing in nature is a suitable vehicle or medium for artistic expression, which is the evident purpose of all figurative Islamic art, is tantamount to the first portion of the confession of faith, namely, there is no god but God. Just as Islamic theology has told us that nothing, absolutely nothing in nature is God, or in any way divine – all creation being creation and hence profane – so the Muslim artist, in his aesthetic profession, is telling us that nothing in nature may be an expression of divinity.

The more the Muslim artist indulged in stylization, the more it dawned on him that God's transcendence demanded more than stylization if it is to be successfully expressed in aesthetics. He discovered that the totality of nature may be denied *en bloc* if he abandoned the stylization of natural objects and reverted to the figures of geometry. These are the very opposite of nature as given to sense. Indeed they stand at the logical conclusion of the stylization process where stylization of the vine, stalk, leaf and flower reaches its ultimate end. To establish the geometrical figure as sole medium of the visual arts is a decision perfectly in accord with *Lā ilāha illā Allāh*. There is in the whole of creation nothing that is Allah, or partakes of Allah or is in any way associated with Allah.

As transcendent Being, Allah is never given to sense, and can therefore never become the object of a sensory intuition. To the artist whose business is to present a sensory intuition of the subject, God is an absolutely hopeless case. The Muslim conscience shudders at the very suggestion of a sensory representation of God. In this very despair of the Muslim artist came the breakthrough. Granted Allah's transcendence removes

Him beyond aesthetic representation and expression, is the same true of His unrepresentableness, of His aesthetic inexpressibility? The answer is negative. God is indeed inexpressible, but His inexpressibility is not. This inexpressibility became the object of aesthetic expression and the unconscious object of the Muslim artist. Stylization and its ultimate, the geometrical figure, constituted the media, the expression of God's inexpressibility constituted the goal. There remained for the Muslim artistic genius to create the design which when applied to the medium would achieve the goal.

This was accomplished before the end of the first Islamic century, when the craftsmen were still for the most part either Christians or converts from Christianity, still committed to the art forms of Byzantium. In the Umawī palaces of Jordan, in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, and the Umawī Mosque of Damascus, which date from the second half of the first *Hijrī* century, there is ample evidence to show that the craftsmen were Byzantine in their craftsmanship but Islamic in some of their work. Either they, or their *maître de travail*, must have been moved by religio-aesthetic considerations other than those which moved Byzantium.

Byzantine and Roman provincial art had known both stylization and the geometrical figure. But their design was devoid of momentum. It was static. The Muslim artist developed a design in which the beholder felt compelled to move from one flower, stalk or figure to another, because the second was in process of formation (i.e., of being beheld) at the very time that the segments of the first were being brought into consciousness. In other words, the design was such that it was impossible to hold one figure in perception without including a part of the next, and to hold the full figure of the second without including a part of the third, and so forth. This gave the vision an *élan* or momentum to move ever forward away from the point at which the sight originally fell. Repetition and symmetry were then discovered to reinforce this momentum by enabling it to disperse itself in all directions. The fractional figure necessitated by the shortage of material space provided an impetus for the

imagination to recreate the missing fractions beyond the material *objet d'art*. The combination of stylization, non-development, non-organicness, fractions enticing the imagination to produce their complements, symmetry and momentum generating repetition – all compelled the imagination of the attentive spectator to reproduce more and more figures at the same rhythm *ad infinitum*. The non-developmental, non-organic nature of the figures dictated that the production or continuation of the design in the imagination be infinite since there is no point at which it can logically terminate. The *objet d'art* thus became a field of vision arbitrarily cut out by its material boundaries from an infinite field; and, like the field of vision of a microscope, gave a precept of the infinite realm beyond it.

The realm beyond and the continuation of the pattern in it are an idea of reason pressing upon the imagination to produce it for consciousness. Certainly, under the impact of the given in the field of vision and the momentum it has generated, the imagination ably fulfils the command and begins production. If strong, that imagination will sustain itself for a considerable time and in considerable space. But by nature it cannot fulfil what is expected of it, namely, the infinite continuation. Sooner or later, therefore, it must realize that its task is impossible, that its effort is hopeless. For the infinite is that which can never become the object of a sensory intuition – even in the imagination. At this point, the effort of the imagination collapses and consciousness gains through the collapse an intuition of the cause of the collapse, of the impossibility of fulfilling the objective of the effort. Such intuition is an intuition of infinity, and infinity is the essential constituent of transcendence.

The *objet d'art* in Islam is esthetically, i.e., from the standpoint of beauty, the design it carries. The design has been called 'Arabesque'. It is the design as well as the esthetic principles on which the design is built. For arabesque is not only a decoration on a planar surface, but the principle embodied in any Islamicized surface, in the façade of an Islamic building, in its floor plan, in the design and colour of a carpet, the illuminated page of a manuscript, the rhythmic and tonal arrangement of a

piece of Islamic music, the arrangement of flowering and/or floriated plants in a garden, of the rising and cascading fountains of aquaculture. The arabesque is called 'decoration' by the orientalist art historians. As such, it is regarded as a hedonic flash of colour, a monotonous repetition, an empty design to fill surfaces, or finally, a compensatory technique to surmount the subconscious fear of the desert void. When these 'savants' wax theological, they argue that Muslim genius spent itself fiddling with arabesque decoration because Islam prohibited the reproduction of figures. They have neither time nor energy to ask why Islam prohibited figurative representation. In fact, the arabesque is not decoration at all. It is not accidental to the *objet d'art*, but its essence and core. Indeed, to cover any object with arabesque is to trans-substantiate it. So much so that the art of the arabesque, of so-called 'decoration', is in truth the art of trans-substantiation. Under the influence of arabesque, the *objet d'art* loses its materiality, its concreteness, its opaqueness, its individuality, the frontiers of its very being and real-existence, even if it were the heaviest, biggest and most solid building. It becomes an air-light, transparent, flying screen of design and rhythm, that serves as a launching pad or runway on which the imagination takes off on its flight – a flight which ends in catastrophe for the imagination but the greatest and deepest sensing of the transcendent possible for man.

*The Expression of Transcendence in
Belles-Lettres*

The question may now be asked, Whence did the Muslims obtain direction for such a great breakthrough in the expression of transcendent reality? Was this development of theirs in the visual arts a pure accident of genius? How did the discovery of the arabesque accord with the values of Islam in other realms? If the arabesque became the dominant principle of textile, metal, glass, leather and woodwork, of architecture, horticulture and aquaculture, of manuscript illustration and illumination, even of music and chanting, surely its roots must run far deeper into the

tradition than its discovery in the visual arts has suggested. Where are these roots and what is their source?

All these questions find their ultimate answer in the phenomenon of the Qur'ān, the revelation which rested the whole of its claim to divine origin on its absolute realization of the literary sublime. Conscious of its sublime quality, the Qur'ān challenged its audience to produce a match for it (*Yūnus* 10: 38; *al-Qaṣaṣ* 28: 49); conscious of the impotence of its audience to do so, it lowered the challenge to ten *sūrahs* or chapters (*Hūd* 11: 13), then to one chapter (*al-Baqarah* 2: 23), then to a few verses (*al-Ṭūr* 52: 33). Towering proudly high above them it taunted them further by declaring their impotence even if mankind and *jinn* were to mobilize themselves for the task in one solid row (*al-Isrā'* 17: 88). Islam's enemies commissioned the ablest among them to rise to the challenge, but they were the first to denounce the contenders as failures when they presented their productions for judgement.

Long before the Prophet, the Arabs had already perfected the literary art and achieved their greatest distinctions in it. Their ability to produce works of great literary merit was tested, and the esteem they accorded to such great works was without parallel in any other culture. History knows of no other people with whom the word and its beauty had equal importance. To the Arabs, the word was a matter of life and death, of oblivion and eternity, of war and peace, of virtue and vice, of nobility and vulgarity.

T'jāz' is the name given to the phenomenon of the Qur'ān's challenge to all men at all times, but especially to the Arab contemporaries of the Prophet, to produce a work matching it in beauty and excellence. It contains two elements: The first is the innate character of the Qur'ān which, when perceived by the mind capable of perceiving it, produces the feeling of fascination, of being moved, of experiencing the highest and most intense values, in short, of encountering ultimate reality with all the experiences attendant upon such encounter. The second is the realization of the difference that separates man, the perceiver, from God, the perceived, an index of which is man's incapacity

to produce anything like the Qur'ān. The former is innate to the Qur'ān; the latter, to man. The Arabs refer to the second simply as *i'jāz*, the phenomenon or event of miraculousness; but refer to the first as *unjuh al-i'jāz* or aspects of miraculousness of the Qur'ān.

That *i'jāz*, as event, has taken place among the believing and non-believing Arabs during the lifetime of Muhammad, as well as among the Muslims of all ages, is an undeniable fact of history. The Qur'ān's challenge to the unbelievers and their failure to meet the challenge has been recorded in the Qur'ān with relish (*taqrīn*). *I'jāz*, however, is not only an event of history. The Qur'ān's challenge is timeless and so is its success. The proof of this is the Qur'ān's continuing power to convert men to Islam, to convince them immediately of its divine origin. No man who reads what the Muslims wrote concerning their experience with the Qur'ān, or who observes the Qur'ān's effects upon their consciousness, their lives and thoughts can avoid the conclusion that the Qur'ān has such character.

The Qur'ān alone was regarded by the Arabs as worthy enough to be divine. Theirs was a connoisseur judgement – accepted by the learned, friend or foe alike – which was passed on the Qur'ānic quality deeming it worthy of the transcendent God and expressing His will. Unlike the earlier prophets, whose prophethood and revelations were established through breaches of the laws of nature – i.e., by overwhelming the epistemic powers of human consciousness – the Qur'ān presented its 'miracle' to those very powers capable of grasping it, and invited them to consider and acknowledge its miraculousness, or divine origin, deliberately. Its appeal was to the faculty or intellection. Whereas the other revelations 'coerced' consciousness with their breaches of natural law, the Qur'ān convinced by its fulfilment of the highest expectations of the intellect. That is why the Qur'ān's miraculousness became the subject of the deepest and most extensive study and analysis. A physical miracle such as Moses or Jesus brought simply overwhelmed its spectators. Such miracle was by nature beyond understanding, and beyond discussion.

Evidently, the Qur'ān must have one or more constitutive

qualities which, if perceived by the capable are indicative of transcendence. Muslims set themselves the task of identifying and analyzing these qualities.

The first element is the non-developmental nature of Qur'ānic prose. This is the quality which baffles all Western readers, for the Qur'ān has neither beginning nor end. The arrangement of its *sūrah*s or chapters is neither chronological, nor systematic. When a Muslim wishes to recite the Qur'ān, he reads *mā tayassara*, i.e., that part of the text which 'easily comes his way'. He may begin reading with any verse he wishes, and he may stop at any other verse. Whatever his choice, the recitation is always perfect. Whether the reader is Muslim, Christian, Jew, Hindu or Buddhist, atheist or agnostic, if he is a man of knowledge in Arabic, the recitation is always sublime. The beginning is always as sweet and perfect as the middle or the end. This non-developmental character makes of the Qur'ānic text a field of vision which God cut out from His infinite will. To know it is to perceive it as such, i.e., as a vehicle for reaching the infinite realm of which it is the expression. For only the supernatural, or divine, is as good in any or every part as it is in its infinite totality.

This aspect of the literary sublime in Islam, namely, non-development, is both ubiquitous and necessary. Drama, the opposite of non-development is utterly ruled out because it is, in its ideal form, the expression of polytheist concrete natural divinity. Non-development characterized Arabic poetry and prose from their origins to the present century. The best Arabic poetry is that which reads beautifully, forwards or backwards, because every one of its verses is complete, autonomous and beautiful in and by itself.

The second aspect of the Qur'ān's miraculousness is momentum. It is analyzable into a literary factor and a musical factor, which work together and reinforce each other. The more one reads, the more one desires to read. Every passage recited generates within the reader and the audience a movement of his imagination to continue the recitation *ad infinitum*. Every passage is a launching pad or runway from which the imagination flies

into the infinite space whose perception is induced by the passage in question. No creation of new verses is involved but re-creation in the imagination aided by memory of verses already recited. The same process occurs when the capable gather in *mushā'arah*, or poetry-recitation session, at which the participant recites poetry of the same metre and rhyme as the one that preceded. Sometimes, the poetry recited is classical and known to all; sometimes it is composed extemporaneously for that occasion. In either case, the recitations are so beautiful and so moving that they arouse the appreciative audience to indulge in extemporary poetical composition observing the same metre, rhyme and modalities. What is phenomenal in such events is that they are commonplace, not only among the Arabic-speaking peoples, but equally among the Persian, the Urdu, Turkish and Malay-speaking peoples whose poetical and esthetic consciousness has been moulded by Islam.

The third aspect is *balāghah*, or eloquence, at the apex of which comes *badī'* or the literary sublime. This aspect is a function of the beauty of composition, of the artistry of the flow, of the exact fitness of the terms, the finesse of the rendering. On one hand, the terms and phrases, the figures of speech, the percepts they evoke, and the composition of all these together into a finished sequence; and, on the other hand, the things, events or states they designate, the meanings they convey – all these are infinite in number, variety and relation. And yet, there is one and only one rendering of them that fits *muqadā al-hāl* (the reality sought). It is to the extent or degree that this ideal is achieved in a composition, that the composition is said to have actualized a measure of *balāghah*. When this measure is at its highest, the passage is recognized as *badī'*. It is this ideal which the Qur'ān has realized in every verse. Every change of it is a change for the worse. Some rare geniuses have achieved a little measure of this superlative quality, but only in their description of one kind of reality in which their genius specialized. The Arabs have recognized Imru'ul-Qays as approximating that category but only when he rides to war; al-Nābighah al-Dhubyānī, but only when he expresses fear; Zuhayr ibn Abī Salmā, but

only when he expresses desire. The Qur'ān has fulfilled the same sublime norms in every subject it touched. Every word in the verse is a jewel; and so is every verse in the *sūrah*. The Qur'ān has no metal in which a few jewels are set to make jewellery. It is all jewels!

The compositional *badī'* of the Qur'ān is combined with the ideational *badī'*, i.e., the highest, noblest religious, ethical, social and personal thought, to make one indivisible unity. In the Qur'ān, the form is sublime; the content is sublime; and both form and content are interlocked with each other so that their separation is impossible without destruction of the sublime nature of the whole. In the sublime quality peculiar to it, none is available without the other. The result of their combination in the Qur'ān is irresistible fascination and terror. No literary composition in human history has ever moved so deeply, so violently, so permanently, so many generations of men and women as the Qur'ān has done. None has shattered and/or reconstructed so many lives! Even the Presbyterian H.A.R. Gibb said he felt the earth shaking under his feet as he recited the *sūrah* entitled 'The Earthquake'. The sublime in the Qur'ān is not static, but dynamic. None can resist its fascination, its terror or its intoxication.

The whole *i'jāz* claim of the Qur'ān would be idle if its power over the minds and hearts of men was dulling, dilating or hypnotizing consciousness in the sense of overwhelming it by reducing its power of perception, its noetic power. The very opposite is the case. The Qur'ān heightens consciousness and enhances it to exert the utmost perceptive, rational, intellectual, empirical, critical power of which it is capable. Its work is carried out under the full light of the sun, as it were, at mid-day, and with unsurpassable realism.

We have seen that the divine attributes are not to be interpreted allegorically; that they must be affirmed as they stand, *bilā kayfa*, without permitting any anthropomorphism. The same applies to the Qur'ān as a whole of which the attributes are only a part. If it evokes intuition of the transcendent without anthropomorphism, and yet without allegorical interpretation,

it does so by its *i'jāz* quality. The language of the Qur'ān moves by evoking poetical figures like any poetry. But unlike human poetry, the Qur'ān moves by its form and content both of which bespeak transcendence together. The former does so by the esthetic categories of non-development, momentum and *balāghah*; the latter by conveying a content that is itself transcendent, hence infinite, absolute, *sui generis*, and moving. In its presence, man loses his ontological poise and equilibrium; for he has, if he understands it, established contact with the source of all being, of all motion, with the transcendent *tremendum et fascinosum*. The intuition of the transcendent through *belles-lettres* is not merely contemplative, but dynamic. For the transcendent reality the *belles-lettres* point to is normative, appealing, moving, commanding and prohibiting. It was under the impact of the transcendent expressed in the literary sublime that Semitic consciousness saw itself as the carrier of divine mission, as the vortex of human history, and the fulfilment of destiny.

*Safeguarding Belles-Lettres Revelation From
Changing Language and Culture*

The total preservation of the Arabic language with all the categories of understanding embedded therein and its continuous use by millions to the present day, eliminated most of the hermeneutical problems confronting the modern reader of the fourteen-centuries-old revelation. The application of Qur'ānic directives to the ever-changing affairs of life will always be new; and so would the translation of its general principles into concrete prescriptive legislations addressing contemporary tasks and problems. This, Islamic jurisprudence has always recognized. But the meaning of the terms of revelation, the categories under which those meanings are to be understood, are certainly realizable today exactly as they were for the Prophet and his contemporaries fourteen centuries ago. The latter, not the former, is the problem of expressing transcendence. Understanding the meanings of the Qur'ān as the Prophet

understood them is the assumption of the application, or misapplication, of those meanings to contemporary problems.

The capacity of any student to understand the revelation today exactly as it was understood on the day it was revealed, is indeed a 'miracle' of the history of ideas. It cannot be explained by the distinction of 'disclosive' and 'creative' functions of language. The former suggests an esoteric level of meaning which is disclosed to the initiates only, and by means of exegesis; and the latter, a fabricative role whose product is not distinguishable from the constructs of pure fiction. Moreover, the 'creative' function is not immune against the charges of relativism and subjectivism which render impossible any claims on behalf of Islam or any religion as such, and treats all claims as personal and dated. The inter-religious dialogue offers little reward if all it can purport itself to be is a dialogue between persons, not religions.

That language changes so that it is never the same is not important. Arabic has not changed, though its repertory of root words has expanded a little to meet new developments. The essence of the language, which is its grammatical structure, its conjugation of verbs and nouns, its categories for relating facts and ideas, and the forms of its literary beauty – has not changed at all. The Heraclitean claim that everything changes and is never the same is a fallacy, because there must be something permanent if change is to be change at all and not the sceptic's 'stream of the manifold'. Far more safe and accurate in the definition of language were the Muslim linguists who recognized in language one and only one function, namely, the purely descriptive. Characteristically, they defined eloquence as 'descriptive precision'. The terrain of lexicography thus became for them sacrosanct – 'God Himself taught Adam the names of things' (*al-Baqarah* 2: 31); and they laboriously produced for the Arabic language of the Qur'ān the most complete lexicographic dictionaries of any language. Creativity, they relegated to the human mind, where it properly belongs, as the capacity to discover and place under the full light of consciousness, aspects of reality which escape the less creative or capable, but which genius captures. The more precise the description of such

apprehended reality, the more eloquent and beautiful it is, as well as the more didactic and instructive. Language – in this case Arabic – thus remained an ordered and public discipline, open to inspection, capable of accurate judgement, and compelling whoever has the requisite intelligence to say to the good author or critic, 'Yes! That's just it!' It was natural that the Islamic revelation would do all this. For without it, considering the transformations the revelations of Moses, Zoroaster, the Buddha and Jesus had gone through as their original languages were lost, forgotten, or 'changed', the transcendent God Himself would be a poor student of the history of religions!

Notes

1. H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), Chapter II, pp. 24–35; James Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), p. 5.
2. H. Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (New York: Harper Torch Books, 1961), pp. 20, 23–4.
3. Alan H. Gardiner, 'Hymns to Amon from a Leiden Papyrus', *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, XL.22 (1905), p. 25, quoted in H. Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, *op. cit.*, pp. 26–7.
4. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, *op. cit.*, pp. 60–72.
5. He Marduk 'verily is the God, the creator of everything... the commands of his mouth we have exalted above the gods... Verily he is the lord of all the gods of heaven and earth; the king at whose instruction the gods above and below shall be afraid... shall quake and tremble in their dwellings... verily he is the light of the gods, the mighty prince... It is he who restored all the ruined gods as though they were his own creation, restored the dead gods to life' (Pritchard, *op. cit.*, pp. 69–70).
6. Martin Buber rightly claims the Hebrew spirit of separate identity is patriarchal and not, as Freud had contended, a product of the Exodus event. See his *Moses and Monotheism*, tr. K. Jones (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1939).
7. John Bright, *A History of Israel* (London: SCM Press, 1960), p. 336.
8. Pritchard, *op. cit.*, pp. 57–8.
9. A number of statements attributed to Jesus by the evangelists contradict this conclusion. But it is not difficult to show that such statements run counter to Jesus' personality and must therefore have been additions made by the evangelists in satisfaction of tensions to which they or their churches were exposed. Such are the statements which declare Jesus' ministry directed to the Jews exclusively (*Matthew* 5: 17–19; 10: 6; 15: 24) and even to the lost among them (e.g., *Luke* 15: 4, 6); those which make Jesus' message subservient to Jewish legalism ('Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled' – *Matthew* 5: 18; those which make Jesus subscribe to Jewish ethnocentrism such as 'this day is salvation come to this house [of Zacchaeus] for as much as he also is a son of Abraham' – *Luke* 19: 9).
10. F.J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity* (London: Macmillan Press, 1920), Part I, Vol. I, p. 398.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 403.
12. A.E.J. Rawlinson, *The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ* (London: Longmans, 1926), pp. 236–7.
13. *Mark* 14: 58. This need not preclude the possibility of God performing another miracle – besides resurrecting the dead, healing the sick and restoring sight to the blind which Jesus performed by God's power in vindication of his prophethood – this time to rebuild the material temple in three days.
14. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.'
15. 'We believe... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, Begotten of the Father before all the ages, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things were made...' (Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), pp. 36–7.
16. Bettenson, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
17. Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, v., quoted in Bettenson, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
18. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I, xxiv, 1, 2, as quoted in Bettenson, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
19. Irenaeus, *op. cit.*, I, xxiv, 3–5, quoted in Bettenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 51–2.
20. Gilbert Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1951), pp. 142–3.

21. *Metamorphoses*, xi, 19 ff, quoted by M.J. Vermaseren, 'Hellenistic Religions', in C. Jones Bleeker and George Widengren, *Historia Religionum* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969), Vol. I, pp. 522-3.

22. *Ibid.*

23. See for substantiating details Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages Upon the Christian Church* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1890).

24. 'May you die as he dies; and may you live as he lives.'

25. *Genesis* 1: 26, 'Let us make man to our image and likeness' proves, for St. Augustine, that in God there is plurality, and humanness. For, he argues, unless the 'us' refers to the trinity, God would have used the singular form; and, unless the likeness of man, i.e., humanness, was in Him, He could not have created man in His likeness (*De Trinitate*, in *The Fathers of the Church*, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963, Vol. 45, p. 20). In *Proverbs* 8: 25 we read: 'Before the mountains were settled into place . . . I was brought forth'; and in *Proverbs* 8: 22: 'The Lord Possessed me, in the beginning of his way'. With such phrases a gnostic Semitic mind sang the eternity of wisdom allowing it to speak in the first person form. Our author took them to refer to Jesus, whom he gnostically identified with the Word, Wisdom, or logos. But in order to justify the Christian notion of Jesus as creaturely person as well as God, he assigned to the two statements the desired disparate meanings respectively (*De Trinitate*, p. 36). Adam's reply to God following his disobedience reported in *Genesis* 3: 8 should also be noted: 'I heard your voice, and I hid myself from your face since I am naked'. This passage constitutes evidence that 'God, the Father . . . appeared . . . through a changeable and visible creature subject to Himself', and hence establishes that the divine substance can be incarnated into a human (*ibid.*, p. 71). The subjunctive form of the divine commandment 'Let there be light' (*Genesis* 1: 3) indicates for Augustine that there was another person whom God must have been addressing. Evidently, his mind is incapable of conceiving a creative act of God preceded by a divine pronouncement expressive of a divine wish. And since he has 'established' that the interlocutor is a being with two natures, one of which is human and has a 'face', he returns to *Genesis* 3: 8 to assert that the 'face' Adam was hiding from was that of Jesus Christ (*ibid.*, pp. 71-2). The grammatical turbulence of *Genesis* 18 was arbitrarily interpreted by the rabbis as referring once to God and once to three angels sent by Him: 'One to announce the tidings of the birth of Isaac; the second to destroy Sodom; and the third to rescue Lot.' 'An angel is never sent on more than one errand at a time' — Midrash' (*Pentateuch and Haggadah*, London: Soncino Press, 1958, p. 63, note 2) is taken by Augustine as evidence for the trinity. 'Since three men were seen, and no one of them is said to be greater than the others in form, or in age, or in power, why do we not believe?', asks Augustine rhetorically, 'that the

equality of the Trinity is intimated here by the visible creature, and the one and same substance in the three persons? What does he mean by saying to them: "No, my Lord", and not, "No, my Lords . . ."? (*ibid.*, pp. 75-7). Finally, Augustine performs a repulsive *tour de force* with *Exodus* 33: 23. In answer to Moses' request that he be permitted to see God's face, God promises to cover Moses when He passes so that he may not see God, and later to uncover him after He passes 'and then you shall see my back parts . . . the 'back parts' or 'posteriora', Augustine claims, 'are commonly and not without reason understood to prefigure the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, the back parts are taken to be His flesh, in which He was born of the Virgin and rose again' (*ibid.*, pp. 84-5).

26. *Against Praxeas*, xii-xiii, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III, pp. 607 ff.

27. *Church Dogmatics*, tr. G.W. Bromley and T.E. Torrence (London: T. & T. Clark, 1960), III, Part I, pp. 191 ff.

28. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), Vol. I, p. 226.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 225-6.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-1; 91-2.

39. Charles P. Price, *The Principles of Christian Faith and Practice* (New Delhi: Islam and the Modern Age Society, 1977), pp. 72-3.

40. *Ibid.*

41. T.R. Miles, *Religion and the Scientific Outlook* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1959), pp. 161-4, quoted in Price, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

42. The most famous and complete version is that prepared by Ibn Tufayl (d. 1185 CE) in Andalus. For a translation, see M. Mahdi and M. Lerner, *Sourcebook of Medieval Political Philosophy*.

43. Ibn Hishām reports in his *Sīrat Rasūl Allah* (Life of the Prophet of God) Heracius's answer as follows: 'Alas, I know that your master is a prophet sent by God . . . But I go in fear of my life from the Romans; but for that I would follow him . . .' tr. by A. Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 656.

44. Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Mīlāl wa al-Nihāl* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Azhar, 1370/1951), pp. 171–9.

45. Hence, their name 'al-Mu'aṭṭilāh', 'the neutralizers', Al-Shahrastānī, *op. cit.*, pp. 61–3.

CHAPTER THREE

The Role of Islam in Global Inter-Religious Dependence

Islam is the youngest of the world's religions. It is unique in that it has related itself to most of the religions of the world; that it has done so in its formative stage; and that on this account, its relation to other religions has a constitutive place in its very essence and core. Islam's relation to other religions has been ideational, i.e., linking the world-view of Islam, its view of God (may He be Glorified and Exalted), of reality, of man, of the world and history to the other religions. It is also practical, i.e., providing a *modus vivendi* for Muslims and adherents of other religions to live and work together, but each group according to the values and precepts of its own faith. In the case of Judaism, Christianity, and Sabaeism, the relation was crystallized first by God through direct revelation, then by the Prophet Muḥammad himself (peace and blessings be upon him) working under divine authority provided by revelation. In that of Zoroastrianism, the same relation was extended by the Prophet's Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) three years after his death (13 AH/635 CE) when Persia was conquered and brought into the fold of Islam. As for Hinduism and Buddhism, the same extension took place following the conquest of the

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lower region of the Indus Valley in 711 CE. In all of these cases, Islam has maintained a long history of cooperative interaction with the other religions: fourteen centuries long with the religions of the Near East; and thirteen centuries long with those of India. It has developed an ideational base for that interaction which is constitutive of the religious experience of Islam, and is hence as old as Islam itself.

It is rather repugnant to Muslim ears to hear Western scholars claim that the discipline of comparative study of religion is a Western innovation born out of the European Enlightenment, or out of Europe's colonial and industrial expansion in the nineteenth century; or that the coming together of the world religions was first initiated by the Chicago Congress in 1893. Joachim Wach (1898-1955) opened his *The Comparative Study of Religion* with the assertion, 'There can be little doubt that the modern comparative study of religions began with Max Müller [1823-1900], about a century ago.' The 'little doubt' in question is the result of ignorance, of a superiority complex which blinds the Western scholar to the achievements of non-Westerners. We are inclined, however, to respond to such a claim with a smile and invite our Western colleagues to do their 'homework'. The contribution of Islam to the academic study of other religions in the past has been colossal by any standard; and its potential contribution to the forthcoming Global Congress is certainly worthy of its great past. It can supply principles and ideas for the encounter of religions, and forms and structures for their co-existence and cooperation. The *modus vivendi* which Islam provided for the world religions in Madinah, Damascus, Cordoba, Cairo, Delhi and Istanbul is certainly worthy of emulation by the whole world. Indeed, we who prepare for the Global Congress would be quite happy if the projected Congress could realize a fraction of what Islam had done many centuries ago.

I. The Ideational Relation

For the Muslim, the relation of Islam to the other religions has been established by God in His revelation, the Qur'ān. No

Muslim therefore may deny it; since for him the Qur'ān is the ultimate religious authority. Muslims regard the Qur'ān as God's own word verbatim; the final and definitive revelation of His will for all space and time, for all mankind. The only kind of contention possible for the Muslim is that of exegetical variation. But in this realm, the scope of variation is limited in two directions: First, continuity of Muslim practice throughout the centuries constitutes an irrefutable testament to the meanings attributed to the Qur'ānic verses. Second, the methodology of Muslim orthodoxy in exegesis rests on the principle that Arabic lexicography, grammar and syntax, which have remained frozen and in perpetual use by millions ever since their crystallization in the Qur'ān, leave no contention without a solution.² These facts explain the universality with which the Qur'ānic principles were understood and observed, despite the widest possible variety of ethnic cultures, languages, races and customs characterizing the Muslim world, from Morocco to Indonesia, and from Russia and the Balkans to the heart of Africa. As for the non-Muslims, these may contest the principles of Islam. They must know, however, that Islam does not present its principles dogmatically, for those who believe or wish to believe, exclusively. It does so rationally, critically. It comes to us armed with logical and coherent arguments; and expects our acquiescence on rational, and hence, necessary, grounds. It is not legitimate for us to disagree on the relativist basis of personal taste, or that of subjective experience.

We propose to analyze Islam's ideational relation in three stages: that which pertains to Judaism and Christianity, that which pertains to the other religions, and that which pertains to religion as such, and hence to all humans whether they belong to any or no religion.

A. Judaism and Christianity

Islam accords to these two religions special status. First, each of them is the religion of God. Their founders on earth, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, are the Prophets of God. What they have

conveyed – the Torah, the Psalms, the Evangelists – are revelations from God. To believe in these prophets, in the revelations they have brought, is integral to the very faith of Islam. To disbelieve in them – nay, to discriminate between them – is apostasy. 'Our Lord and your Lord is indeed God, the One and Only God.'³ God described His Prophet Muḥammad and his followers as 'believing all that has been revealed from God'; as 'believing in God, in His angels, in His revelations and Prophets'; as 'not distinguishing between the Prophets of God'.⁴

Arguing with Jews and Christians who object to this self-identification and claim an exclusivist monopoly on the former prophets, the Qur'ān says: 'You claim that Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and their tribes were Jews or Christians [and God claims otherwise]. Would you claim knowledge in these matters superior to God's?'⁵ "Say", [Muḥammad], "We believe in God, in what has been revealed by Him to us, what has been revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the tribes; in what has been conveyed to Moses, to Jesus and all the prophets from their Lord".⁶ 'We have revealed [Our revelation] to you [Muḥammad] as We did to Noah and the Prophets after him, to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon, and David, Who revealed the Psalms to David.'⁷ 'It is God indeed, the living and eternal One, that revealed to you [Muḥammad] the Book [i.e., the Qur'ān] confirming the previous revelations. For it is He Who revealed the Torah and the Evangelists as His guidance to mankind.'⁸ 'Those who believe [in you, Muḥammad], the Jews, the Sabaeans or the Christians – all those who believe in God and in the Day of Judgement, and have done the good works. They have no cause to fear, nor will they grieve.'⁹

The respect with which Islam regards Judaism and Christianity, their founders and scriptures, is not courtesy, but acknowledgement of religious truth. Islam sees them in the world not as 'other views' which it has to tolerate, but as standing *de jure*, as truly revealed religions from God. Moreover, their legitimate status is neither socio-political, nor cultural or civilizational, but religious. In this, Islam is unique. For no

religion in the world has yet made belief in the truth of other religions a necessary condition of its own faith and witness.

Consistently, Islam pursues this acknowledgement of religious truth in Judaism and Christianity to its logical conclusion, namely, self-identification with them. Identity of God, the source of revelation in the three religions, necessarily leads to identity of the revelations and of the religions. Islam does not see itself as coming to the religious scene *ex nihilo*, but as reaffirmation of the same truth presented by all the preceding prophets of Judaism and Christianity. It regards them all as Muslims, and their revelations as one and the same as its own.¹⁰ Together with *Ḥanīfism*, the monotheistic and ethical religion of pre-Islamic Arabia, Judaism, Christianity and Islam constitute crystallizations of one and the same religious consciousness whose essence and core is one and the same. The unity of this religious consciousness can be easily seen by the historian of civilization concerned with the ancient Near East. It is traceable in the literatures of these ancient peoples¹¹ and is supported by the unity of their physical theatre or geography, of their languages (for which they are called 'Semitic'), and by the unity of artistic expression. This unity of the religious consciousness of the Near East consists of five dominant principles which characterize the known literatures of the peoples of the Near East. They are: First, the disparate ontic reality of God, the Creator, from His creatures, unlike the attitudes of ancient Egyptians, Indians, or Chinese, according to which God or the Absolute is immanently His own creatures; second, the purpose of man's creation is neither God's self-contemplation nor man's enjoyment, but unconditional service of God on earth, His own 'manor'; third, the relevance of Creator to creature, or the will of God, is the content of revelation and it is expressed in terms of law, of oughts and moral imperatives; fourth, man, the servant, is master of the manor under God, capable of transforming it through his own efficacious action into what God desires it to be; fifth, man's obedience to and fulfilment of the divine command results in happiness and felicity, its opposite in suffering and damnation, thus coalescing worldly and cosmic justice together. The unity of 'Semitic'

religious and cultural consciousness was not affected by intrusion of the Egyptians in the days of their Empire (1465–1165 BC),¹² nor by the Philistines from Caphtor (Crete?); nor by the Hittites, Kassites, or 'People of the Mountains' (the Aryan tribes?), who were all semiticized and assimilated, despite their military conquests.¹³ Islam has taken all this for granted. It has called the central religious tradition of the Semitic peoples '*Hanīfism*' and identified itself with it. Unfortunately for the early Muslim scholars who benefited from this insight as they laboured, the language, histories and literatures furnished by archaeology and the disciplines of the ancient Near East were not yet available. They hence scrambled after the smallest bits of oral tradition which they systematized for us under the title of 'History of the Prophets'. In reading their materials, we must remember, however, that the accurate knowledge of Abraham (c. 2000–1650 BC), of Julius Caesar (100 or 102–44 BC), of 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ¹⁴ and of Napoleon (1769–1821), about the Sphinx or the pyramids of Egypt, for instance, was equal – i.e. nil.

The Islamic concept of '*Hanīf*' should not be compared to Karl Rahner's 'Anonymous Christians'. '*Hanīf*' is a Qur'ānic category, not the invention of a modern theologian embarrassed by his church's exclusivist claim on divine grace. It has been operating within the Islamic ideational system for fourteen centuries. Those to whom it is attributed are the paradigms of faith and greatness, the most honoured representatives of religious life, not the despised though tolerated approximators of the religious ideal. Islam's honouring of the ancient prophets and their followers is to be maintained even if the Jews and Christians stop or diminish their loyalty to them. 'Worthier of Abraham are those who really follow him, this Prophet and those who believe in him.'¹⁵ In the Qur'ān, the Christians are exalted for their asceticism and humility, and they are declared the closest of all believers to the Muslims. '[O Muḥammad], you and the believers will find closest in love and friendship those who say "We are Christians", for many of them are ministers and priests they are not arrogant.'¹⁶ If, despite all this commendation of them, of their prophets, of their scriptures, Jews and Christians

persist in opposing and rejecting the Prophet and his followers, God commanded all Muslims to call the Jews and Christians in these words: 'O People of the Book, come now with us to rally around a fair and noble principle common to both of us, that all of us shall worship and serve none but God, that we shall associate naught with Him, that we shall not take one another as lords beside God. But if they still persist in their opposition, then warn them that We shall persist in our affirmation [You bear witness that we are Muslims].'¹⁷

Evidently, Islam has given the maximum that can ever be given to another religion. It has acknowledged as true the other religion's prophets and founders, its scripture and teaching. Islam has declared its God and the God of that religion as One and the same. It has declared the Muslims the assistants, friends and supporters of the adherents of the other religion, under God. If, after all this, differences persist, Islam holds them to be of no consequence. Such differences must be not substantial. They can be surmounted and resolved through more knowledge, goodwill and wisdom. Islam treats them as domestic disputes within one and the same religious family. And as long as we both recognize that God alone is Lord to each and every one of us, no difference and no disagreement is beyond solution. Our religious, cultural, social, economic and political differences may all be composed under the principle that God alone – not any one of us, not our passions, our egos, or our prejudices – is God.

B. The Other Religions

Islam teaches that the phenomenon of prophecy is universal; that it has taken place throughout all space and time. 'Every human', the Qur'ān affirms, 'is responsible for his own personal deeds. On the Day of Judgement, We shall produce publicly the record of such deeds and ask everyone to examine it as it alone will be the basis of reckoning. Whoever is rightly guided is so to his own credit; whoever errs does so to his own discredit. There is no vicarious guilt; and We shall not condemn [i.e. We shall not judge] until We had sent a prophet.'¹⁸ It follows from God's absolute justice that He would hold nobody responsible unless

His law has been conveyed, promulgated and known. Such conveyance and/or promulgation is precisely the phenomenon of prophecy. The same principle was operative in the ancient Near East, where the states carved their laws in stone stelae which they erected everywhere for people to read. Ignorance of the divine law is indeed an argument when it is not the effect of unconcern or neglect; and it is always an attenuating factor. Being absolutely just as well as absolutely merciful and forgiving, God, Islam holds, left no people without a prophet to teach them the divine law. 'There is no people', the Qur'ân asserts, 'but a warner/prophet has been sent to them.'²⁹ Some of these prophets are widely known; others are not. So neither the Jewish, nor the Christian, nor the Muslim ignorance of them implies their non-existence. 'We have indeed sent prophets before you [Muhammad]. About some of them We have informed you. About others We have not.'³⁰ Thus the whole of mankind is responsible, past and present, capable of religious merit and felicity as well as of demerit and damnation, because of the universality of prophecy.

As Islam conceives of it, the divine system is one of perfect justice. Universalism and absolute egalitarianism are constitutive of it. Hence, not only the phenomenon of prophecy must be universally present, its content must be absolutely the same. If the divine law conveyed by the prophets to their peoples were different in each case, the universalism of the phenomenon would have little effect. Therefore, Islam teaches that the prophets of all times and places have taught one and the same lesson; that God has not differentiated between His messengers. 'We have sent to every people a messenger', the Qur'ân affirms, 'to teach them that worship and service are due to God alone; that evil must be avoided [and the good pursued] . . .'³¹ 'We have sent no messenger except to convey [the divine message] in the tongue of his own people, to make it[s content] clearly comprehensible to them.'³² With this reassurance, no human has any excuse for failing to acknowledge God, or to obey His law. '[We have sent to every people] prophets to preach and to warn, that no human may have an argument against God's judgement of that

individual's deeds].'³³ Islam thus lays the ground for a relation with all peoples, not only with Jews and Christians whose prophets are confirmed in the Qur'ân. As having once been the recipients of revelation, and of a revelation that is identical to that of Islam, the whole of mankind may be recognized by Muslims as equally honoured, as they are, by virtue of revelation and also as equally responsible, as they are, to acknowledge God as the only God and to offer Him worship, service and obedience to His eternal laws.

If, as Islam holds, all prophets have conveyed one and the same message, whence the tremendous variety of the historical religions of mankind? To this question, Islam furnishes a theoretical answer and a practical one.

(1) Islam holds that the messages of all prophets had but one essence and core composed of two elements: First is *tauhîd*, or the acknowledgement that God alone is God and that all worship, service and obedience are due to Him alone. Second is morality, which the Qur'ân defines as service to God, doing good and avoiding evil. Each revelation had come figurized in a code of behaviour particularly applicable to its people, and hence relevant to their historical situation and conditions. This particularization does not affect the essence or core of the revelation. If it did, God's justice would not be absolute and the claims of universalism and egalitarianism would fall to the ground. Particularization in the divine law must therefore affect the 'how' of service, not its purpose or 'what', the latter being always the good, righteousness, justice and obedience of God. If it ever affects the 'what', it must do so only in those areas which are non-constitutive and hence unimportant and accidental. This principle has the special merit of rallying humanity, whether potentially or actually, around common principles of religion and morality; to remove such principles from contention, from relativism and subjectivism.³⁴ There is therefore a legitimate ground for the religious variety in history. In His mercy, God has taken due account of the particular conditions of each people. He has revealed to them all a message which is the same in essence; but He has conveyed to each one of them His law in a

prescriptive form relevant to their particular conditions, to their own grade of development on the human scale. And we may conclude that such differences are *de jure* as long as they do not affect the essence.

(2) The second cause of religious diversity is not as benevolent as the first. The first, we have seen, is divine; the second, human. To acknowledge and do the will of God conveyed through revelation is not always welcomed by all men. There are those with vested interests which may not agree with the divine dispensations, and there are numerous circumstances favouring such disagreement.

First, divine revelation has practically always and everywhere advocated charity and altruism, ministering by the rich to the material needs of the poor. The rich do not always acquiesce to this moral imperative and may incline against it. Second, divine revelation is nearly always in favour of ordered social living. It would counsel obedience of the ruled to the law and self-discipline. But it always does so under the assumption of a rule of justice, which may not always be agreeable to rulers and kings who seek to have their own way. Their will-power may incline them against the social ethic of revelation. Third, divine revelation is always reminding man to measure himself by reference to God and His law, not by reference to himself. But man is vain; and self-adoration is for him a constant temptation. Fourth, revelation imposes upon humans to discipline their instincts and to keep their emotions under control. However, humans are inclined to indulgence. Orgies of instinct-satisfaction and emotional excitement have punctuated human life. Often, this inclination militates against revelation. Fifth, where the contents of revelation are not judiciously and meticulously remembered, taught, and observed publicly and by the greatest numbers, they tend to be forgotten. When they are transmitted from generation to generation and are not embodied in public customs observed by all, the divine imperatives may suffer dilution, shift of emphasis, or change. Finally, when the divine revelation is moved across linguistic, ethnic and cultural frontiers – indeed, even to generations within the same people but far

removed from its original recipients in time, it may well change through interpretation. Any or all of these circumstances may bring about a corruption of the original revelation.

That is why God has seen fit to repeat the phenomenon of prophecy, to send forth prophets to re-convey the divine message and re-establish it in the minds and hearts of humans. This divine injection into history is an act of sheer mercy. It is continual, always *ad hoc*, unpredictable. To those who inquired, What is the rationale behind sending Muhammad at that time and place? the Qur'ān answered: 'God knows better where and when to send prophets to convey His message.'²³

C. *Islam's Relation to all Humans überhaupt*

Islam has related itself, equally, to all other religions, whether recognized, historical or otherwise. Indeed, even the a-religionists and atheists – whatever their colour – Islam has related itself to them in a constructive manner, its purpose being to rehabilitate them as integral members of society.

This relation constitutes Islam's humanism. At its root stands the reason for creation, man's *raison d'être*. The first mention of the divine plan to create man occurs in a conversation with the angels. 'I plan to place on earth a vicegerent for Me.' The angels responded: "Would you place on earth a being who would also do evil and shed blood while we always praise and glorify and obey You?" God said: "I know [another purpose] unknown to you".²⁴ The angels, evidently, are beings created by God to act as His messengers and/or instruments. By nature, they are incapable of acting otherwise than God instructs them to act and, hence, they are incapable of morality. Their necessary predicament, always to do God's bidding, differentiates them from the human creature God was about to place on earth. In another dramatic and eloquent passage, the Qur'ān reports: 'We [God] offered the trust to heaven and earth and mountain. They refused to carry it out of fear. But man did carry it.'²⁵ In the heavens, on earth and in the mountains, God's will is fulfilled with the necessity of natural law. Creation, therefore, to the

exclusion of man, is incapable of fulfilling the higher part of God's will – namely, the moral law. Only man is so empowered; for morality requires that its fulfilment be free; that its opposite or alternative, that which is a-moral, be possible of fulfilment by the same person at the same time and in the same respect. It is of the nature of the moral deed that it be done when the agent could do otherwise. Without that option or possibility, morality would not be morality. If done unconsciously or under coercion, for example, the moral deed might have utilitarian value, but not moral.

Vicegerency of God on earth means man's transformation of creation – including above all himself – into the patterns of God. It means obedient fulfilment of His command which includes all values, all ethical imperatives. The highest of imperatives are the moral. Since man alone is capable of moral action, only he could carry the 'divine trust' from which 'heaven and earth and mountain' shied away. Man, therefore, has cosmic significance. He is the only creature through whom the higher part of the divine will could be realized in space and time. To clarify the *raison d'être* of man, the Qur'ān has rhetorically asked mankind: 'Would you then think that We have created you in vain?'²⁸ The Qur'ān further affirms: 'O God! Certainly You have not created all this [creation] in vain!'²⁹ As to the deniers of such a purpose for creation, the Qur'ān turns to an assertive, even offensive tone: 'Indeed We have not created heaven and earth and all that is between in vain. That is the presumption of unbelievers. Woe and Fire to them.'³⁰ As to the content of the divine purpose, the Qur'ān asserts: 'And I have not created men and *jinn* except to worship/serve Me.'³¹ The verb '*abada*' means worship as well as serve. It has been used in this double sense in all Semitic languages. In the Qur'ān, it is given further elaboration by the more specific answers given to the same questions of Why creation? Why man? 'It is He Who created heavens and earth . . . that you [mankind] may prove yourselves in His eye the worthier in the deed.'³² 'And it is He Who made you His vicegerents on earth . . . that you may try [to prove yourselves] worthy of all that He had bestowed upon you.'³³

In order to enable man to fulfil his *raison d'être*, God has created him capable, and 'in the best of forms'.³⁴ He has given him all the equipment necessary to achieve fulfilment of the divine imperatives. Above all, 'God, Who created everything perfect . . . created man out of earth . . . perfected and breathed into him of His own spirit.' He has bestowed upon him 'hearing, and sight and heart' [the cognitive faculties].³⁵ Above all, God has given man his mind, his reason and understanding, with which to discover and usufruct the world in which he lives. He has made the earth and all that is on it – indeed the whole of creation including the human self – malleable, i.e., capable of change and of transformation by man's action, of engineering designed to fulfil man's purposes. In religious language, God has made nature 'subservient' to man. He has granted mankind 'lordship' over nature. This is also the meaning of man's *khilāfah* or vicegerency of God in the world. The Qur'ān is quite emphatic in this regard: 'God has made the ships [the winds which drive them] subject to you . . . And the rivers . . . the sun and moon, day and night.'³⁶ 'He has made the seas subservient to you . . . camels and cattle . . . all that is on earth and in heaven.'³⁷ God has planted man on earth precisely to reconstruct and usufruct it³⁸ and, to this purpose, made him lord of the earth.³⁹ In order to make this engineering of nature and its usufruct possible, God has embedded in it His '*sunan*' or patterns,⁴⁰ the so-called 'laws of nature' which we know to be permanent and immutable solely through our faith that He is no trickster, not a malicious but a beneficent God.⁴¹ Reading God's patterns in nature or creation is equally possible in psychic or social nature,⁴² thus opening nearly all areas of creation to human observation and cognition, as well as a fair portion of the divine purpose or will.

Besides all this, God has revealed His will through the prophets directly and immediately, and commanded them to proclaim it to their peoples in their own tongues. He has sent the Prophet Muḥammad with a final version which he covenanted to guard against tampering and corruption,⁴³ and which has been preserved intact, along with Arabic grammar and syntax, lexicography, etymology and philology – all the linguistic

apparatus required to understand it exactly as it was revealed. Certainly this was a gratuitous gesture, an act of pure charity and mercy, on the part of the benevolent God. Its purpose is to make man's knowledge and fulfilment of the divine will easier and more accessible.

Every human being, Islam affirms, stands to benefit from these divine dispensations. The road to felicity is a free and open highway which anyone may tread of his own accord. Everybody is innately endowed with all these rights and privileges. God has granted them to all without discrimination. 'Nature', 'the earth', 'the heavens' – all belong to each and every human. Indeed, God has done all this and even more! He has implanted His own religion into every human at birth. The true religion is innate, a *religio naturalis*, with which all humans are equipped.⁴³ Behind the dazzling religious diversity of mankind stands an innate religion inseparable from human nature. This is the primordial religion, *Ur-Religion*, the one and only true religion.⁴⁵ Everyone possesses it unless acculturation and indoctrination, misguidance, corruption or dissuasion had taught him otherwise.⁴⁶ All men, therefore, possess a faculty, a 'sixth sense', a '*sensus communis*' with which they can perceive God as God. Rudolph Otto called it 'the sense of the numinous'⁴⁷ and phenomenologists of religion have recognized it as the faculty which perceives the religious as 'religious', as 'sacred',⁴⁸ autonomous, and *sui generis*, without reductionism.

Finally, Islam entertains no idea of 'the fall of man', no concept of 'original sin'. It holds no man to stand in an innate, necessary predicament out of which he cannot lift himself. Man, it holds, is innocent. He is born with his innocence. Indeed, he is born with a thousand perfections, with faculties of understanding, and an innate sense with which to know God. In this all men are equal, since it follows from their very existence, from their creatureliness. This is the basis for Islamic universalism. Concerning morality and piety, man's career on earth, Islam countenances no distinction between humans, no division of them into races or nations, castes or classes. All men, it holds, 'issued from a single pair', their division into peoples and tribes being a convention designed for 'mutual acquaintance'.⁴⁹ 'Nobler

among you', the Qur'ān asserts, 'is only the more righteous'.⁵⁰ And the Prophet added, in his farewell sermon: 'No Arab may have any distinction over a non-Arab, no white over a non-white, except in righteousness.'⁵¹

II. The Practical Relation

Under these precepts, whether explicitly revealed in the *ipsisima verba* of God or implied therein, the Prophet Muḥammad worked out and proclaimed the constitution of the first Islamic state. He had barely arrived in Madinah (July, 622 CE) when he brought together all the inhabitants of Madinah and its environs and promulgated with them the Islamic state and its constitution. This event was of capital importance for the relation of Islam to the other religions, and of non-Muslims to Muslims of all times and places. Four years after the Prophet's demise in 10 AH/632 CE, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (c. 581–644), the second Caliph, ordered that the date of promulgation of this constitution was so crucial for Islam as a world movement that it should be considered the beginning of Islamic history.

The constitution was a covenant, whose guarantor was Allah, between the Prophet, the Muslims, and the Jews. It abolished the tribal system of Arabia under which the Arab defined himself and by which society was governed. Henceforth, the Arab was to be defined by Islam; his personal and social life to be governed by Islamic law, the Shari'ah. The old tribal loyalties gave way to a new social bond which tied every Muslim to all other Muslims across tribal lines, to form the ummah. The ummah is an organic body whose constituents mutually sustain and protect one another. Their personal, reciprocal and collective responsibilities are all defined by law. The Prophet was to be its chief political and juristic authority; and, as long as he lived, he exercised this power. After his death, his *khulafā'* (pl. of *khalīfah*, 'successor') exercised political authority, while juristic authority devolved exclusively upon the '*ulamā'*' (the jurists), who had by then developed a methodology for interpretation, renewal and expansion of the Shari'ah.

A. *The Jewish Ummah*

Alongside this ummah of Muslims stands another ummah of the Jews. Their old tribalist loyalties to the Arab Aws and Khazraj tribes were to be supplanted by the bond of Judaism. Instead of their citizenship being a function of their clientship to this or that Arab tribe, it was hence to be a function of their Jewishness. Their life was to be structured around Jewish institutions and governed by the Torah, their revealed law. Political authority was vested in the chief rabbi who was also known as *Resh Galut*, while juristic authority rested with the system of rabbinic courts. Overarching both ummahs was a third organization, also called '*al-ummah*', or '*al-dawlah al-Islāmiyyah*' (the Islamic state) whose constituents were the two ummahs and whose *raison d'être* was the protection of the state, the conduct of its external affairs, and the carrying out of Islam's universal mission. The state could conscript the ummah of Muslims in its services, whether for peace or for war, but not the ummah of Jews. However, Jews could volunteer their services to it if they wished. Neither the Muslim nor the Jewish ummah was free to conduct any relation with a foreign power, and much less to declare war or peace with any other state or foreign organization. Such remains the exclusive jurisdiction of the Islamic state. The Jews who entered freely into this covenant with the Prophet and whose status the new constitution raised from tribal clients on sufferance to citizens *de jure* of the state, later betrayed it. The sad consequence was first the fining of one group of them, followed by the expulsion of another group found guilty of a greater offence, and finally the execution of a third group that plotted with the enemy to destroy the Islamic state and the Islamic movement. Although these judgements were made by the Prophet himself, or by an arbitrator agreed upon by the parties concerned, the Muslims did not understand them as directed against the Jews as such, but against the guilty individuals only. Islam recognizes no vicarious guilt. Hence, when the Islamic state later expanded to include northern Arabia, Palestine, Jordan and Syria, Persia and Egypt, where numerous Jews lived, they were automatically

treated as innocent constituents of the Jewish ummah within the Islamic state. This explains the harmony and cooperation which characterized Muslim-Jewish relations throughout the succeeding centuries.

For the first time in history since the Babylonian invasion of 586 BC, and as citizens of the Islamic state, the Jew could model his life after the Torah and do so legitimately, supported by the public laws of the state where he resided. For the first time, a non-Jewish state put its executive power at the service of a rabbinic court. For the first time, the state-institution assumed responsibility for the maintenance of Jewishness, and declared itself ready to use its power to defend the Jewishness of Jews against the enemies of Jewishness, be they Jews or non-Jews. After centuries of Greek, Roman and Byzantine (Christian) oppression and persecution, the Jews of the Near East, of North Africa, of Spain and Persia, looked upon the Islamic state as liberator. Many of them readily helped its armies in their conquests and cooperated enthusiastically with the Islamic state administration. This cooperation was followed by acculturation into Arabic and Islamic culture, and produced a dazzling blossoming of Jewish arts, letters, sciences and medicine. It brought affluence and prestige to the Jews, some of whom became ministers and advisors to the caliphs. Indeed, Judaism and its Hebrew language developed their 'golden age' under the aegis of Islam. Hebrew acquired its first grammar, the Torah its jurisprudence, Hebrew letters their lyrical poetry, and Hebrew philosophy found its first Aristotelian, Mūsā ibn Maymūn (Maimonides) (c. 1135/8–1204), whose thirteen precepts, couched in Arabic first, defined the Jewish creed and identity. Judaism developed its first mystical thinker as well, Ibn Gabirol (c. 1021–58), whose 'Sūfi' thought brought reconciliation and inner peace to Jews throughout Europe. Under 'Abd al-Rahman III (891–961) in Cordoba, the Jewish prime minister, Hasdai ben Shapirut, managed to effect reconciliation between Christian monarchs whom even the Catholic Church could not bring together. All this was possible because of one Islamic principle on which it all rested, namely, the recognition of the Torah as

revelation and of Judaism as God's religion, which the Qur'ān attested and proclaimed.

B. *The Christian Ummah*²³

Shortly after the conquest of Makkah by Muslim forces in 8 AH/630 CE, the Christians of Najrān in Yaman sent a delegation of chieftains to meet the Prophet in Madinah. Their purpose was to clarify their position *vis-à-vis* the Islamic state, and that of the state *vis-à-vis* them. The conquest of Makkah had made the Islamic state a power to reckon with in the region. The delegates were the guests of the Prophet, and he received them in his house and entertained them in his mosque. He explained Islam to them and called upon them to convert to his faith and cause. Some of them did; and instantly became members of the Muslim ummah. Others did not. They chose to remain Christian, and to join the Islamic state as Christians. The Prophet constituted them a Christian ummah, alongside the Jewish and Muslim ummah(s), within the Islamic state. He sent with them one of his Companions, Mu'adh ibn Jabal, to represent the Islamic state in their midst. They converted to Islam in the period of the second caliph (2–14 AH/634–46 CE), but the Christian ummah in the Islamic state continued to grow by the expansion of its frontiers to the north and west. Indeed, for the greater part of a century, the majority of the citizens of the Islamic state were Christians, enjoying respect, liberty and a new dignity which they had not enjoyed under either Christian Rome or Byzantium. Both these powers were imperialist and racist and they tyrannized their subjects as they colonized the territories of the Near East. An objective account of the conversion of the Christians of the Near East to Islam²⁴ should be reading for all, especially for those still labouring under the Crusades-old prejudice that Islam spread among Christians by the sword. Christians lived in peace and prospered under Islam for centuries, during which time the Islamic state has seen righteous as well as tyrannical sultans and caliphs. Had it been a part of Islamic sentiment to do away with the Christian presence, it could have been executed without a

ripple in the world or history. But it was Islam's respect for and acknowledgement of Jesus as the Prophet of God and of his Evangel as revelation that safeguarded that presence. The same is true of Abyssinia, a neighbouring Christian state which sheltered the first Muslim emigrants from the wrath of Makkah and maintained with the Islamic state at the time of the Prophet the covenant of peace and friendship. The expansive designs of the Islamic state never included Abyssinia precisely on that account.

C. *Ummah(s) of Other Religions*

Persia's incursion into Arabia had left behind it some Persian and some, though very few, Arab converts to the Zoroastrian faith. A large number of these lived in the buffer desert zone between Persia and Byzantium, and in Shaṭṭ al-'Arab, the lower region of the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, where Arabia and Persia overlapped. Notable among the Persian Zoroastrians in Arabia was Salmān al-Fārisī, who converted to Islam before the Hijrah and became one of the illustrious Companions of the Prophet. According to some traditions, it was the Prophet himself who, in the 'Year of Delegations' (8–9 AH/630–31 CE), the year which witnessed the tribes and regions of Arabia sending delegations to Madinah to pledge their fealty to the Islamic state, recognized the Zoroastrians as another ummah within the Islamic state. Very soon afterwards, the Islamic state conquered Persia and included all its millions within its citizenry. Those who converted to Islam joined the ummah of Muslims; the millions of others who chose to remain Zoroastrian were accorded the same privileges and duties accorded by the constitution to Jews. The Prophet had already extended their application to the Christians eight years after the constitution was enacted. They were extended to apply to the Zoroastrians in 14 AH/636 CE, following the conquest of Persia by the Prophet's Companions, if not sooner by the Prophet himself.

Following the conquest of India by Muḥammad ibn Qāsim in 91 AH/711 CE, the Muslims faced new religions which they had never known before, Buddhism and Hinduism. Both religions

co-existed in Sind and the Punjab, the regions conquered by Muslims and joined to the Islamic state. Muḥammad ibn Qāsim sought instruction from the Caliph in Damascus on how to treat Hindus and Buddhists. They appeared to worship idols, and their doctrines were the farthest removed from Islam. Their founders were unheard of by the Muslims. The Caliph called a council of 'ulamā' and asked them to render judgement on the basis of the governor's report. The judgement was that as long as Hindus and Buddhists did not fight the Islamic state, as long as they paid the *jizyah* or tax due, they must be free to 'worship their gods' as they please, to maintain their temples and to determine their lives by the precepts of their faith. Thus, the same status as that of the Jews and Christians was accorded to them.¹⁴

The principle governing Islam and the Islamic state's relations with other religions and their adherents had thus been established. It was implemented as the Islamic state entered into relations with those adherents, a process which took place either during the Prophet's life-time or very soon after it. When the Shari'ah crystallized in prescriptive form, the status, rights and obligations of Muslim and non-Muslim citizens were already included. For fourteen centuries in many places, or less because of the later arrival of Islam or the imposition of Western law by colonial administrations, the Shari'ah successfully governed Muslim-non-Muslim relations. It created a *modus vivendi* which enabled the non-Muslims to perpetuate themselves – hence their continuing presence in the Muslim World – and to achieve felicity as defined by their own faiths. The atmosphere of the Islamic state was one replete with respect and honour to religion, piety and virtue, unlike the tolerance of modern times in the West born out of scepticism regarding the truth of religious claims, of cynicism and unconcern for religious values. The Islamic Shari'ah is otherwise known as the 'millah' or 'millet' system (meaning 'religious communities'), or the 'Dhimmah' or *Zimmi* system (meaning the covenant of peace whose *dhimnah* or guarantor is God). It cannot be denied that evil rulers existed in the Muslim World as in any other empire. Where they existed, Muslims suffered as well as non-Muslims. Nowhere in Islamic

history, however, were non-Muslims singled out for prosecution or persecution. The constitution which protected them was taken by Muslims to be God-inspired, God-protected. The Prophet had already warned: 'Whoever oppresses any *dhimmi* (non-Muslim peace-covenanter with the Islamic state), I shall be his prosecutor on the Day of Judgement.' No other religion or societal system has ever regarded the religious minority in a better light, integrated it into the stream of the majority with as little damage to either party, or treated it without injustice or unfairness as Islam did. Indeed, none could. Islam succeeded in a field where all the other religions failed because of its unique theology which recognized the true, one and only religion of God to be innate in every person, the primordial base of all religions, and finally, identical with Sabaeism, Judaism and Christianity.

Evidently, far from being a national state, the Islamic state is a world order in which numerous religious communities, national or transnational, co-exist in peace. It is a universal *Pax Islamica* which recognizes the legitimacy of every religious community, and grants it the right to order its life in accordance with its own religious genius. It is superior to the League of Nations and the United Nations because, instead of national sovereignty as the principle of membership, it has taken the principle of religious identity. Its constitution is divine law, valid for all, and may be invoked in any Muslim court by anyone, be he a simple Muslim or non-Muslim individual, or chief of the largest religious community.

III. Conclusion: Islam's Contribution to Global Religious Interdependence

Islam's potential contribution to world order, to inter-religious dialogue, understanding and living, to global religious interdependence can be very, very significant.

First, Islam has 1400 years of experience in inter-religious intercourse between the widest variety of ethnic and religious entities.

Second, with Judaism and Christianity, the two other surviving

Semitic religions, Islam has built a relation of common origin, of one and the same God, of one and the same tradition of prophets and revelation, tantamount to self-identification with them.

Third, this relation of identity with Judaism and Christianity which Islam established with the authority of revelation, the Muslims extended to cover all other religions on the basis of their common origin in God, and in a necessary *religio naturalis* innate to all humans.

Fourth, following theory with practice and implementation, Islam devised the *millah* system as an Islam-led federation of religious communities, guaranteeing their freedom, and girding it with rights and obligations clearly laid down in Islamic law and invokable in the courts by individuals as well as communities, Muslim as well as non-Muslim.

Fifth, rather than scepticism, doubt, secularism or materialism, which would tolerate the religions of the world out of contempt and unconcern, Islam has based itself and its interaction with other religions on respect for them and concern for their adherents.

Sixth, without falling into dogmatism, Islam has laid its claim rationally and critically to seeking to convince the others in freedom and responsibility. It did not dilute its claim, nor renounce the exclusivity of religious truth, while ever maintaining its esteem for other religious claims.

Seventh, and finally, Islam managed to create an atmosphere of mutual dependence and love between the adherents of various religions, and to secure their cooperation in the building of a universal Islamic civilization, where humanism, world affirmation and piety remained dominant.

Discussion

Osborne Scott: What is the significance of the term 'infidel' and its function in Islamic thought, particularly with reference to your theory and practice?

Ismail al-Faruqi: The term 'infidel' is applied to the person who does not recognize God, not to the adherent of another religion who believes in God. An infidel is, nonetheless, a person who enjoys the endowments which I have mentioned. He has been created by God as His vicegerent. He has been granted the benefit of revelation at some time in the past. Therefore my relationship to him may require more patience, energy and eloquence on my part to convince him that he ought to join the camp, that's all.

Osborne Scott: It is not a derogatory term, then?

Ismail al-Faruqi: Yes, it is a derogatory term. Why should it not be?

Osborne Scott: It is not used in reference to Christians or Jews or other religious persons?

Ismail al-Faruqi: No Jew or Christian may be called 'infidel' *a priori*. However, if he denies God or God's unity or His transcendence, he may and should be so called.

Arifin Bey: In my lectures on Islam and Islamic culture in Japan, I refer to the birth of Islam as the first reformation. Am I correct?

Ismail al-Faruqi: Yes, Islam was indeed the first 'reformation' of Judaism and Christianity, the first 'Protestantism'. Equally, Islam gave birth to Biblical criticism. The Qur'an was the first piece of textual criticism.

James Deotis Roberts: I would like to know something about the nature of religious authority. What are some of the bases for religious authority in Islam?

Ismail al-Faruqi: Islam has no church. Nobody can make *ex cathedra* statements about what Islam is or is not. The Pauline principle of the 'priesthood of all believers' and the Lutheran principle of '*sola scriptura*' were never so true as they are of Islam. For Muslims, only the Qur'an has authority. This authority, fortunately, is not beset by the kinds of hermeneutical problems

and difficulties which beset the Old and New Testaments, because not only the language of the Qur'ān has been preserved but also the categories by which the language is understood. Anybody who learns the language can be assured of an understanding of the Qur'ān identical to that of its first hearers. So, authority in Islam belongs to revelation, to the Qur'ān as the verbatim word of God.

Marcus Braybrooke: I heard Dr. al-Faruqi saying that Islam is true, whereas Judaism and Christianity are a corrupt form of that truth. I think the traditional Christian view, vice versa, would have been similar. I think some Christians would now say that whilst the fullness of revelation is in Jesus, the understanding of that revelation is partial; and this seems to give a dynamic to interfaith dialogue. Now I am not quite sure, but I would rather think that Muslims would not make a similar distinction between God's revelation in the Qur'ān and their understanding of it, which could be partial. That is really my question. Dr. al-Faruqi seemed to be hinting at a dynamic in the meeting of the different communities. Is there any distinction between the revelation in the Qur'ān and the Muslim's understanding of it?

Ismail al-Faruqi: Islam regards Judaism and Christianity as religions of God, and it differentiates them from their historical forms present in the faiths of this Christian or that Jew. The Muslim is very careful here. He does not attribute any falsehood or deficiency to Judaism or Christianity as such, but to their manifestations and applications. It is legitimate to criticize actual people: this Jew for failing to live by the revelation that came to Moses, or that Christian for failing to live by the revelation that came to Jesus. The same kind of distinction is applied to the texts of revelation. Although it is a point of the Islamic creed to believe in the Torah and Evangel and Psalms, the Muslim would not vouch for the current texts as true copies of the original revelations. In this, Muslims may disagree with the fundamentalist adherent of these scriptures, but there is near-identity of judgement on this critical issue, among the enlightened believer described by the Rev. Braybrooke and the Biblical critic. In day-to-day encounters, the Muslim usually gives

the benefit of the doubt to the Jew and the Christian as to how far their understanding of the revelation is true or faulty. As to the point of the capacity of the Muslim to understand the Qur'ān exhaustively and perfectly, it must be said that though the Muslim does indeed understand the scripture if he knows the Arabic language, yet his understanding of the Qur'ān is never absolutely complete. No human can ever claim to put the will of God, as it were, 'in his pocket'. The will of God is infinite, like God Himself; and the Qur'ān is what God has given us of His own will. In a sense, the Qur'ān is God *in percipi*; that is, all that we can know of God. Our understanding of it, therefore, is never absolutely perfect, though it can be adequate. Otherwise, God would not be the benevolent, purposive and merciful Creator we know Him to be. If His revelations are acts of mercy, their contents must be comprehensible to man. That is why God affirmed in the Qur'ān that every prophet was sent a revelation 'in his own tongue to clarify [the will of God] to his own people'. In the case of the Qur'ān, I repeat, Arabic, the language which I speak today, is still the language which my Prophet spoke; and the categories of understanding, of grammar, of lexicography, of syntax, of literary criticism and so forth are still identically the same as those which the Prophet and his contemporaries knew. Hence, the Muslim in command of Arabic can and does bring to the Qur'ān trustworthy understanding.

Paolo Soleri: Science proposes that we have about 4.5 billions of years of development of life in the solar system. We do not know what might be outside of the solar system. Could you, then, give us a hint as to how the Muslim views the connection between this immense and very harsh – in many ways tragic – but also very beautiful development, in contrast to the historical religions as you have been presenting them.

Ismail al-Faruqi: Islam teaches that this cosmic process is the creation of God; that it is the maintenance of God; that God's will or patterns are embedded into this cosmos so that what happens, happens in accordance with those patterns. Islam teaches also that this cosmos was created for the sake of man, that man may prove himself the worthier in his deeds and thereby

realize the purpose of God. The Qur'an says that God created the stars to beautify the firmament, whose beauty no one can deny; that God created the regular motions of sun and moon so that man may reckon time through their motion and find his orientation, which is exactly what humans do. In the Islamic view, this world of ours is the centre of creation and man is the centre of this world. Hence, the importance of man's religion and conduct.

Paul Bairoch: As an Anglican priest, I find it very hard to tie the theory and the practice together. I mean, this month the bishop of my church in Iran was shot at and the finances were confiscated. In what sense can the religious minority be said to have freedom when that sort of event happens? Perhaps you may say that that is an exceptional circumstance. So, my substantive question relates to the situation in Saudi Arabia. I am not sure how you can say that Islam guarantees the freedom to convince and to be convinced, if it is illegal for an inhabitant of the city of Makkah to renounce Islam; or if it is illegal for a member of any other religion to become an inhabitant of Makkah or the surrounding province.

Ismail al-Faruqi: First of all, let us consider the case of the bishop who was shot at in Iran. Iran is going through the aftermath of a very, very serious revolution. This revolution is the result of a terrible policy that has been followed by the allies from World War I days, and in fact before World War I days. You remember the Tobacco Revolution in the 80s and 90s of the last century, etc. So, the Iranians are extremely angry at the Shah, their tyrant and oppressor, as well as at all his stooges, his agents and collaborators. That the bishop has been suspected of past collaboration with the Shah stands to reason. It is understandable, though not excusable, that in the enthusiasm revolution generates, somebody tended to take the law into his own hands. But it is illegitimate for anyone to be dealt with outside the law process. Islam further teaches two principles: First, that the first aggressor is more unjust than the respondent-aggressor, even when both have committed toward each other identically the same deeds. It is evident that the Shah, his regime and collaborators were the first to aggress upon the masses. Second,

that Islamic justice does not prescribe the turning of the other cheek, but responding to injustice with the same measure. The principle of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is Islamic as well as Biblical as well as Mesopotamian. Islam added to it the imperative of mercy and forgiveness, not as a substitute for justice but in addition to it.

Let us now turn to the Muslim's freedom to renounce Islam. The Muslim in Makkah (or anywhere else) is free to renounce his religion; but he is not free to renounce loyalty to the Islamic state and remain a citizen of Makkah. The confusion comes from the fact that to be Muslim is both to subscribe to a religion and to be a citizen of the Islamic state. Therefore if he renounces the one, he must renounce the other and emigrate from Makkah. For him to renounce religion and to keep his citizenship means, in fact, to assert disloyalty to the state. The illegality should be ascribed to his change of political commitment, not to his religious faith.

The situation in Islam is radically different from that of Christianity, where religion and the state are separate, and hence, irrelevant to each other. This notwithstanding, it was illegitimate up through Cromwell's days to be a Jew in England; illegitimate to be a Protestant in France or a Jew in Spain; and, up until a few years ago, through World War II, according to the Bishop of Oslo, it was illegitimate to be a Jew in Norway. Unlike the case of Christian countries, it was never illegitimate to be a Jew or a Christian or a Zoroastrian or a Hindu or a Buddhist in the Islamic state.

Paul Bairoch: Could a Roman Catholic live in the city of Makkah?

Ismail al-Faruqi: No, he could not. The reason for the prohibition is that Makkah and its environs are regarded as holy; that every person who enters it must, ten or so miles before reaching it, perform ablutions, take off all his clothing and jewellery, don the two pieces of white, unsewn, cotton cloth, and perform the ritual of *'umrah* inside the Haram (sanctuary). If no Muslim is allowed to enter Makkah without fulfilling this rite of respect to the Holy, obviously no non-Muslim may reside in or enter it. If it is legitimate for a church to keep all but the officiating priest

from the altar area, why may the Muslim not keep the non-Muslim out of Makkah, the whole of which Islam declared to be an altar?

Kasim Gulek: I am from Turkey. This is not a religious problem; it is a political problem. During the Second World War, it was also illegal for the Japanese to live in California.

Benjamin Uffenheimer: I am from Israel, from Jerusalem. Firstly, let me congratulate Professor al-Faruqi for his message of peace. I am only sorry that this message came from Temple University and not from Saudi Arabia. Anyhow, I wish to congratulate you. The main question I have concerns not only the practice which we experience during this generation. It also pertains to your sharp-minded analysis of fundamental perceptions of Islam which you developed. But firstly, a question following the other gentlemen: As we are experiencing these days the terrible events which are going on in Iran and you describe them as political events, how do you explain the religious personality of the Ayatollah, of his Holiness Ayatollah Khomeini?

Ismail al-Faruqi: Please, sir, may I correct you? Please don't use 'holiness' when talking of any human. Only God is holy. Holiness belongs only to Allah.

Benjamin Uffenheimer: Thank you; sorry! The Ayatollah is threatening to murder, or to allow the murder of, hostages. This is a religious personality who speaks in his religious standing. How could you explain the religious personality like the late Ḥajj Amīn al-Ḥusaynī allying himself during World War II with Hitler in his extermination of the Jews? Is that a political question? Secondly, I have a theoretical question. You explained to us the conception of *Pax Islamica*. As far as I understood you, you explained it as a cosmological concept; but as far as I know, *Pax Islamica* is also an historic concept. So, what is the relationship of Islam towards all people, towards all nations who are living outside *Pax Islamica*? Would you explain to this audience what are the main demands of Islam from those who are living outside *Dār al-Islām*? In this connection, I would be very obliged to you if you could explain to us the conception of 'jihād' and its connection with the present Arab policy.

Ismail al-Faruqi: Thank you for your many questions. I must beg the audience's indulgence because this calls for quite a good bit of explanation. Let me start with the theoretical question. The theoretical question is, after all, the more important. The gentleman is right when he said that the *Pax Islamica* was also an historical fact. In the Muslim view, the world was divided into *Dār al-Islām* (literally, 'the House of Islam') or *Dār al-Salām* (literally, 'the House of Peace') and *Dār al-Ḥarb* (literally, 'the House of War'). You ask, what is the Islamic basis for that division? When the Prophet founded the Islamic state in Madinah, *Dār al-Salām* was limited to Madinah. The Jews were included in that state as an ummah alongside the ummah of Muslims. Likewise, when some tribes of the Arabian peninsula entered into a covenant of peace with the Prophet without converting to Islam, they were included within that dominion. Abyssinia was also regarded as falling within *Dār al-Salām* because it had entered into a relationship of peace with the Islamic state. *Dār al-Salām*, therefore, was not a monolithic structure thoroughly made up of Muslims, but of many communities, some Muslim and others non-Muslim. This became more obvious as the political and military frontiers of the Islamic state stretched from France to India. Anybody could join it upon deciding to enter into a relation of peace with the Islamic state. When a state or community refused to enter into such a relation of peace, then obviously it must be said to be in a state of war. We should remember that if those countries were classified as *Dār al-Ḥarb* or the House of War, it was not because their populations were not Muslim, but because of the refusal to enter into an abode of peace, into a relationship of peace with the Islamic state. You must also remember that non-Muslim laws were legitimate within the Islamic state, that non-Muslims were citizens. All that Muslims and the Islamic state can legitimately demand of the non-Muslim state is to join the order of peace. This has nothing to do with Islam's call to God which continues regardless of the political relation. But the call to Islam, to faith, to God, can carry no coercion, no compulsion. The decision to convert can be itself only when it is entered into in freedom by a conscious, adult,

capable, moral individual. This is not unlike the dispensations of modern, current international law. When the People's Republic of China was not in a state of peace, had not covenanted for a relationship of peace with the United States, the United States as well as China regarded each other as in a state of war. Juristic consequences follow from such regarding, and would have been applied, for instance, if some Americans had fallen into the hands of the Republic of China or vice versa. Either country would have treated the citizens of the other as prisoners of war. Goods which fall into the hands of the other party are confiscated and regarded as enemy property. Why? Because the other party has refused to enter into a relationship of peace. This is the conceptual or theoretical or juristic basis for *Dār al-Islām*, the House of Peace, which was meant to envelop the cosmos. Hence, my description of it as cosmic, not 'cosmological', as you said. The Islamic state is hoped by all Muslims some day to include the whole world. The *Pax Islamica* which the Islamic state offers is more viable than the United Nations, an organization dominated by the mighty, born out of convention, offering no recourse but to sovereign states. *Per contra*, the *Pax Islamica* is dominated by law, born out of nature and necessity, has law courts open to all plaintiffs, and is backed by the power of a standing, universal army.

The doctrine of Jihād or Holy War is valid in Islam. A Holy War could be entered into only for two reasons. The first reason is defence. When the Islamic state, its lands and people are attacked, it is certainly its duty to defend them. The second is the undoing of injustice wherever it takes place. Like the Muslim individual within *Dār al-Islām*, the Islamic state regards itself, and does so rightly, as vicegerent of God in space and time, a vocation which lays a great responsibility upon the Islamic state. The Islamic state acknowledges with enthusiasm and pride her responsibility to redress injustice wherever men have caused it – even if that has been the other side of the moon. The Muslim regards it as his religious duty to rise up and put an end to injustice. A war entered into for the purpose of setting the balance of justice is holy.

Now, applying these theories to the case of Iran, and to Arab resistance against Zionism: the Muslim point of view is that the West has been the aggressor in Iran; that to harbour the Shah, who committed innumerable crimes against his people, and to appropriate stolen property is theft, which in Islam is punishable by cutting off the hand. The billions that the Shah robbed from the public wealth are acts of injustice which the Iranian people feel must be redressed. Apparently, such redressing is involving violent measures which must not be viewed in isolation from the injustice they are intended to undo. We can be proud of the American tradition of America as haven and refuge for the victims of injustice. I myself am such a victim and I am grateful that America has given me that haven. But, then, harbouring the perpetrator of injustice does not fall into that category.

As far as Zionism is concerned, the Muslim view is that the Zionists are aggressors in Palestine; that Palestine was the victim of an armed robbery, first by British bayonets (the Mandate) and then by Czechoslovak bayonets in 1948. It was Czechoslovakia under direct Russian instructions that first supplied the Zionists with arms and enabled them to carve out of Palestine an area one hundred times larger than what they had until then acquired, whether by legal or illegal means. Then following that, there was another armed robbery by French bayonets (for those of you who have forgotten 1956) and then after that by American bayonets. The principles of Islam being what they are, the Muslims are obliged under their faith to rise in resistance to that robbery in order to set the balance of justice right again.

Paolo Soleri: Before you got into the Iranian and Palestinian questions, I felt that I was listening to a very clear definition of Islamic tolerance. But this is intolerance.

John Meagher: As a Roman Catholic layman who has managed to stay loyal, you will understand me when I say that I know how much silliness I have to deal with, and how important it is to keep my faith alive. But I want to know who decides who is tolerated, and how is the decision implemented?

Ismail al-Faruqi: You ask, who decides who is to be tolerated? In my speech I said that God has granted all the rights in question

innately to all human beings. I did not say that any Muslims decide such matters.

John Meagher: He has decided in favour of those who have a book religion! I think that was smart, but I think it gets us in trouble. In favour of which others has He decided?

Ismail al-Faruqi: He has decided in favour of all humans.

John Meagher: Why, under His jurisdiction, are other human beings killed?

Ismail al-Faruqi: Because humans are sometimes silly, as you said; because humans have passions, are obstinate and proud, do not see the truth without having their ears boxed.

John Meagher: I am not talking about boxing of ears; I am talking about murder!

Ismail al-Faruqi: Unfortunately, this is the reality of the tragic world in which we live.

Myrtle Langley: I profess to be a Christian, but I belong to a particular denomination of the Christian faith, and probably to a group within that denomination, if I were to be honest. I would not want to speak for all Christians in Christianity. I want to put this question in a way that might help us here to understand some of the distinctions within Islam when we ask questions about Iran. I take Dr. al-Faruqi's statement, as it were, for a common denominator within Islam, but I think it would greatly help our discussion if he were to distinguish for us somewhat between Shi'ite Islam and Sunni Islam as it relates to Iran; because, unless I am very wrong, this has a lot to do with the situation there and our understanding of it.

Ismail al-Faruqi: Madam, the mass media in the West have tried to connect what is happening in Iran during the last two or three years with the sectarian history in Islam. I assure you that they are not related. I would be happy to survey with you the whole history of sectarianism in Islam in order to prove the point, but if my knowledge gained over fifty-nine years of studying Islam is worth anything, please do not count on discovering a relationship between Shi'ite Islam, as you call it, and what is happening in Iran today. What is happening in Iran today would happen in Algeria or Morocco or Pakistan or

Indonesia or Somalia or Turkey, wherever the same conditions obtained.

Kasim Gulek: My learned friend al-Faruqi has done an excellent job in explaining Islam. The fact that this discussion is taking place here, I think is very hopeful. Yet it looks bad that one attacks the other and one tries to belittle the other. Still, all these ideas and sentiments that are in us should be expressed and answered. It is a very good thing and I am very glad that it has happened. And I hope that it shall happen again.

One important point we have to stress is this: religion and politics should be taken up separately. Do not mix up Islam and Iran. Do not say in one breath Islam and events in Saudi Arabia. The political aspect is distinct from the religious aspect. Religion, the explanation of religion, one's beliefs can be expounded distinctly and easily; but within politics, there are other considerations. There are great misconceptions in the West about Islam. There have been periods of severe conflict between Islam and Christianity, particularly. The country to which I belong has been an instrument in that for centuries. The Turks have gone into Europe, conquered Europe up to the doors of Vienna, and carried the banner of Islam. In those days, nationality did not count for much; the Turks were coming and they were Muslims, whereas the other nations were Christians. So, there was a conflict between Islam and Christianity; nationality came later. Because of this severe historical conflict that lasted for centuries, one considered the other an eternal enemy and brought about as much evil as possible against the other. Let us not continue to be under the influence of these secular animosities. Let us try to be rational. Let Islam as religion be explained, but without touching on the negative political aspect of it; let Christianity be explained without necessarily bringing out its bad political history. A few minutes ago, I very briefly answered the question why none but Muslims can be in Makkah by referring to the Japanese who could not be in California during World War II. It was not only a matter of the Japanese as enemies; those who were excluded were Americans whose families had been here for generations. They had served the country loyally. But a crisis came about; it

was war, it was politics. Such things can happen during war or during peacetime, for a short while, or for a long while. We should not dwell upon these things; these are not important. Islam has been tolerant all through history. One example of it is the Ottoman State. The Ottoman State was composed of all kinds of ethnic nationalities. There were Christians, there were Jews, there were Arabs. Sometimes there was persecution, sometimes not, but persecution was not peculiar to Islam. Persecution was also conducted by Christians. There is no benefit to be gained if we insist upon discussing these negative aspects of what has happened historically. Let us try to bring to light what was good and what good can come about from now on. Let us not insist on what was bad. Within the Ottoman State, all these minorities and diverse nationalities had exactly the same rights as the Turks and Muslims. There was an Armenian foreign minister who headed the Turkish delegation to the Congress in Vienna that was to decide upon the fate of the Ottoman State. He was loyal to his country and he was understood to be a loyal member of that State. It was natural. There were Arab Prime Ministers, the Grand Vizier called Isaac the Arab; there was another Prime Minister, an Albanian. This aspect of that great state was good; let us dwell upon this, rather than on how one persecuted the other. The discussions that are taking place here are useful. Let us speak about these things and put them to the light; let us answer, but let us not take them passionately, so that they do not become points of difference. Let us bring about unison. I am particularly thankful to Dr. al-Faruqi. He has done excellently in his exposition and his answers. Thank you.

Warren Lewis: We Christians have killed more Jews than the Muslims have. I am sure. If I wanted to, from my Anabaptist position, I could work us into a white-hot heat against the bloody Catholics and Lutherans who 'baptized' us Dunkards in the ponds of Europe and sent us straight to heaven because they did not let us come up again into European hell. It was intended as some sort of poetic irony, was it not, to take the Baptists and make martyrs of them by their own sacrament, to baptize them so thoroughly, they would not pop up again? I do not choose to

grind my axe on this subject, though frankly, I, too, have a bit of undigested church history stuck in my craw!

If we are to have a Global Congress, it seems to me there is a certain level of emotional maturity required of us all as we deal with one another. We all have our historic pain, we all have been mistreated. We have all killed and we have been killed. We have been persecuted and we have been persecutors. It is that pervasive sinfulness innate to religion itself of which we must repent as we come together. I repent of it. That is my position as a follower of Jesus. I say, Lord have mercy on us all and help us to forgive one another, as we have been forgiven. For the sake of the Global Congress, let us strive for that emotional maturity which allows the kind of conversation to take place which has taken place today. Thank you, Dr. al-Faruqi, and all of you who have spoken and who have listened.

Notes

1. Ed. Joseph M. Kitagawa (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 3. Wach here referred his readers to other Western authors such as Louis Henry Jordan, *Comparative Religion in Genesis and Growth*; Pinard de la Boullaye, *L'Étude comparée des religions*; Mensching, *Geschichte der Religionswissenschaft*; Haydon, Hardy and others, in support of his claim. The same idea is held by Wach's colleague and editor, J.M. Kitagawa, 'The Life and Thought of Joachim Wach', and 'The History of Religions in America' in Mircea Eliade and J.M. Kitagawa, *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959); in the same opus, by Friedrich Heiler, 'The History of Religions as a Preparation for the Cooperation of Religions', pp. 132 ff; by A.C. Bouquet in his *Comparative Religion* (Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 19-20; by Jan de Vries, *The Study of Religion: A Historical Approach* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967), pp. ix ff, whose treatment of the subject gives not one indication that he is aware of any contribution to the subject by anyone outside the Graeco-Western tradition.

2. Suffice it here to warn that the situation of hermeneutical despair, or at least confusion, which exists in the case of Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and other scriptures, has absolutely no parallel in Islam.

3. Qur'ān, al-'Ankabūt 29: 46, al-Shūrā 42: 15.

4. Qur'ān, al-Baqarah 2: 285.

5. *al-Baqarah* 2: 140.

6. *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 84.

7. *al-Nisā'* 4: 163.

8. *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 2-4.

9. *al-Mā'idah* 5: 69.

10. Qur'ān, *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 67; *al-Anbiyā'* 21: 71-94.

11. An analysis of ancient Near Eastern religious consciousness may be read in this author's *Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1974), pp. 3-34.

12. The evidence of Tall al-'Amarnah (Akhetaten) is the very contrary. The Egyptian colonial governors in Palestine and Jordan communicated with the Pharaoh not in the language of Egypt, but in Akkadian.

13. Regarding the latter, Sabatino Moscati wrote: 'In the course of establishing themselves, the new peoples thoroughly absorbed the great cultural tradition already existing. In this process of absorption, Mesopotamia seems to prevail... Like Rome in the Middle Ages, despite its political decadence, Mesopotamia... celebrates the triumph of its culture [over its enemies].' *The Face of the Ancient Orient* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1962), p. 164.

14. Leader of the Muslim conquest of Egypt, 19 AH/641 CE.

15. Qur'ān, *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 68.

16. *al-Mā'idah* 5: 82.

17. Qur'ān, *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 64.

18. *al-Isrā'* 17: 13-15.

19. *al-Fāṭir* 35: 24.

20. *Ghāfir* 40: 78; *al-Nisā'* 4: 163.

21. *al-Nahl* 16: 36.

22. *Ibrāhīm* 14: 4.

23. *al-Nisā'* 4: 165.

24. It should be added here that Islam holds its revelation to be mainly a revelation of 'what' that can become a 'how' befitting the historical situation. Thus, in Islam, the prescriptive form of the law may and does change, but not its spirit, purpose or 'what'. Islamic jurisprudence has devised and institutionalized a system to govern the process of evolution of the law.

25. *al-An'ām* 6: 124.

26. *al-Baqarah* 2: 30.

27. *al-Aḥzāb* 33: 72.

28. *al-Mu'minūn* 23: 115.

29. *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 191.

30. *Ṣād* 38: 27.

31. *al-Dhāriyāt* 51: 36.

32. *Hūd* 11: 7. 'All that is on earth and all the worldly ornaments We have made thereof, are to the purpose of men proving themselves worthier in the deed' (*al-Kahf* 18: 7).

33. *al-An'ām* 6: 165.

34. *al-Tīn* 95: 4.

35. *al-Sajdah* 32: 7, 9.

36. *Ibrāhīm* 14: 32-3.

37. *al-Nahl* 16: 14; *al-Hajj* 22: 36-7, 65; *Luqmān* 31: 20; *al-Jāthiyah* 45: 12.

38. *Hūd* 11: 61.

39. *al-Mulk* 67: 15.

40. Qur'ān, *al-Rūm* 30: 30; *al-Fath* 48: 23.

41. On the philosophical uncertainty of the laws of nature, see C.I. Lewis, *Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* (Lasalle, Ill.: Open Publishing Co., 1946) and George Santayana, *Skepticism and Animal Faith* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923). Their position, which is that of contemporary science, is epistemologically identical to that held by al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 CE) in his controversy with the philosophers (see his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* or *Refutation of the Philosophers*, tr. by Sabih Kamālī (Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1963)).

42. Qur'ān, *al-Dhāriyāt* 51: 20-1; *al-Aḥzāb* 33: 62; *al-Fāṭir* 35: 43.

43. Qur'ān, *al-Hijr* 15: 9.

44. Qur'ān, *al-Rūm* 30: 30.

45. Qur'ān, *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 19.

46. This is the substance of the *ḥadīth*, 'Every man is born a Muslim. It is his parents that make him Jew or Christian.'

47. In his *The Idea of the Holy*.

48. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns of Comparative Religion* (London: Sheed & Ward Ltd., n.d.), and *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961).

49. Qur'ān, *al-Hujurāt* 49: 13.

50. *Ibid.*

51. Ishāq ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Rasūl Allah (The Life of Muhammad)*, tr. A. Guillaume. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946).

52. Neither the Christian Roman Empire nor Christian Byzantium was interested in evangelizing Arabia and spreading Christianity among the Arabs. The Arabs were known to the Christian Empire which dealt with them as shippers and traders; for, the monopoly of marine traffic in the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, and of land traffic from Arabia to Byzantium and from Persia to Egypt belonged to the Arabs. When Persia made an incursion into South Arabia seeking to interfere in the Red Sea and south-north flow of trade, Byzantium instructed its proxy, Christian Abyssinia, to send an expeditionary force to Yemen. The Abyssinians succeeded in establishing themselves in Yemen, sought to conquer Makkah in 'The Year of the Elephant' (the first time the Makkans ever saw the animal), and were defeated. That was in 571 CE, the year of the birth of Muḥammad, remembered because of its ominous events and Makkian victory (*al-Fil* 105: 1-5). A few decades later, the Abyssinians withdrew. They had, however, built a cathedral in San'a and converted some Arabs to Christianity. The delegates they sent to meet the Prophet were second-generation Christians.

53. Thomas Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (London, 1906, 2nd Edition, 1913; also Lahore: M. Ashraf Publications, 1961).

54. Al-Kūfī's *Shāh-Nāmāh*, as translated and reported by H.M. Elliott, in his *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians* (London: Trübner and Co., 1867, Vol. I, pp. 184-7).

CHAPTER FOUR

A Comparison of the Islamic and Christian Approaches to Hebrew Scripture

This article endeavours to compare the Islamic and Christian approaches to Hebrew Scripture; that is to say, to describe the processes of thought implied in the transformation of Hebrew Scripture into the Old Testament and to compare them with those implied in the transformation of some narratives of Hebrew Scripture into the Qur'ān. It does not seek to analyze the problem of literary or textual transmission, of how and when Hebrew Scripture became the Old Testament, or of where the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him) received his foreknowledge of Abraham, Jacob and Moses without which the Qur'ānic revelations delivered by the angel would have been incomprehensible to him. Taking these questions for granted, it attempts to establish the significance of the Christianization and Islamization of Hebrew Scripture.

I

If we were to look upon Hebrew Scripture not as Old Testament or as Qur'ān, but as Hebrew Scripture, and if we were

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to read it not in Victorian English or twentieth-century American, but in the original Hebrew; if we were to allow Hebrew Scripture alone to speak for itself, to transport us to its own ancient world in Abraham's Ur, Jacob's Padan Aram, Moses' Egypt and Sinai, in Palestine and Persia and Assyria, if we were to allow Hebrew Scripture to place us, as it were, in the *Sitz-im-Leben* in which its poems, oracles and narratives were received as expressing the Hebrews' inner thoughts and feelings, fears and aspirations – if indeed, we did all this and took full advantage of the achievements of Biblical archaeology and ancient history, what would Hebrew Scripture appear in fact to be?

Read from this presupposition-free standpoint, Hebrew Scripture presents us with the story of the life of the Hebrew. Every theological and moral idea, historical or geographical account is subordinated to the overall theme of the growth and decay of a people, and derives its significance from its pertinence to the history of that people. Hebrew Scripture is the record of Hebrew national history, written and preserved for the sake of the Hebrews, in order to mirror or to inculcate their faith in themselves as a people or to edify them in that faith. It is often held that the most characteristic feature of this national history is their religion and that the most central concept of their religion is that of the Godhead. But the fact is that religion is a characteristic not of the Hebrews, but of their later descendants, the Jews. As we understand it today, religion was impossible to the Hebrews. Their 'religion' was their nationalism; and it was this nationalism of the ancestors that became – with its literature, its laws and customs – the religion of later times, of the Exile and post-Exile Jews down to the present day. The Ancient Hebrew worshipped himself; he sang his own praise. His god, Jahweh, was a reflection of his own person, a genuine *deus ex machina* designed to play the role of other-self in the Hebrews' favourite intellectual game, namely, biographical painting or self-portraiture in words.

The god of the Hebrews is not what Christians and Muslims understand by the word 'God' (may He be Glorified and Exalted), or what modern Jews understand by that term after centuries of

exposure to Christian and Islamic influences. Rather, the 'God' of the Hebrews is a deity which belonged to the Hebrews alone. They worshipped it as 'their God', always calling it by its own proper names, of which it had many. To be sure that it is not confused with any other gods – the possibility and existence of which was never denied, though they were always denigrated – the Hebrews were fond of calling their god by the unmistakably relational names of 'God of Abraham, ... of Jacob, ... of Isaac, ... of Israel, ... of Zion', etc.¹ This deity could not even conceive of itself as capable of being worshipped outside the limits of their geographic domain.² Their mind was so obsessed with 'the God of the Hebrews' that it was incapable of developing the concept 'God' as a connotative category of thought rather than a class name with denotative meaning only. Theirs was certainly not monotheism, but monolatry, since there is not a single time where such a connotative concept of God occurs in Hebrew Scripture. Wherever 'God' is mentioned, it is always the particular deity that is in question.³ True, at a late stage of their history and only at that stage, they did regard their god as lord of the universe, but their doing so was always an attempt at extending its jurisdiction so as to requite their own national enemies. Their god was never the god of the *goyim* in the sense in which he was said to be the god of the Hebrews; the former always falling under his power in sufferance, as patients of his might, especially of his revenge of his people, never equally as subjects of his own creation or care.⁴ Significantly, such extension of his jurisdiction did not take place except under the dream of Isaiah of a master-race, vanquishing the nations and entering them into a relation of servile servitude to the Hebrews.⁵

II

This Hebrew Scripture was Christianized. Its Christianization appears to have been predetermined by four notions which are implications of the Christian belief that Jesus is God. These pertain to the nature of revelation, the nature of divine action, the nature of man and the nature of God.

First, the Christian believes that Jesus is 'the Word of God'. This fact determines for him the nature of revelation. Since Jesus was also man, and therefore an event in history, divine revelation must be an error, not something that God says, but something that He does. And Jesus is the revealed word inasmuch as he is a doing of God, a historical event, whose every part or deed is divine because Jesus himself is wholly God. From this it follows that revelation is not ideational but personal and historical.⁶ Jesus, the perfect personality, the perfect event, the perfect history, is according to this belief, God's perfect revelation.

From this Christian point of view, Hebrew Scripture is not the conceptual word of God, but that of the Jahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomist and Priestly editors. Its divine status does not pertain to its ideas and laws. These constitute the human tools which the editors have used in order to record the revelation. The word of God in Hebrew Scripture is the events, the doing and living of Hebrew Scriptural personalities. These events are revelation. Pointing to the dramas of Hebrew Scripture, the Christian exclaims, *Voilà* God's acts in history! Acts all designed and predetermined by Him to the end that He may reveal Himself and achieve His purpose. God's method being that of revelation through personality, God chose a people, the Hebrews, and took them by the hand, as it were, on a long journey. At the end of this journey, when the time was fulfilled, He sent His Word, Jesus, and through his personality, i.e. his living and dying, God achieved man's redemption. Hebrew history is *Heilsgeschichte* or salvation-history.

This position has advantages: It provides what is for Christians the greatest event of history, namely, the advent of Jesus, with the necessary anticipatory set of historical events, the antecedent links in a determined nexus of historical events. It gives a theological sense to Hebrew national life, to the Jews' self-centredness and separatism; for under its purview, their self-centredness is not racist nationalism but something which subserves a divine purpose. Finally, the words and, indeed, even the individual deeds of scriptural personalities can be as banal or as sublime as they may. The divine element that is here involved is the broad-

stepping movement of history, the constituents of which are the more significant events of election, migration, exodus, invasion and conquest, political growth and decay, defeat and exile as well as the response of faith and trust, the handing down of the law, the dawning of the Messiah-expectancy, etc.

This position of the Christian presents a few difficulties, however. It runs counter to the textual evidence of 'Thus saith the Lord.' The prophets had a sincere and arresting consciousness that the word they spoke was dictated to them by their God. Under the Christian view, 'Thus saith the Lord' must be explained psychologically; for God acts, rather than speaks. And if on the other hand, God were to reveal Himself once by acting and once by speaking, the question then becomes one of assigning primacy to either form of communication. The Christian, if he is to speak as a Christian, must uphold the pre-eminence of event above all else. Indeed he must hold all speech-revelation as subservient to and determined by event-revelation. Thus, *Koh amar Yahweh* may have been sincerely uttered by the prophets, but it was not really true. They were under an illusion. The truth is that God merely caused them to see it that way; but it was not really, absolutely, so.

Secondly, the notion of a deterministic history, though the kind of determination that is here in question does not have to be the efficient, the material or the formal, but the finalistic, is not easily reconciled with the ethical facts, the phenomena of freedom, of responsibility and of conscience. There is little evidence to support the thesis that Jacob's migration to Egypt was an act of God and not the free responsible act of Jacob; that the successful escape of the Hebrews from Egypt and their victory over the Canaanites were not of their own doing. Historical determinism, even though the determiner is God, is groundless speculative construction. At best, it is a theory; a theory contradicted by moral phenomena, the facts of ethical living and acting. It is an instance of the logical fallacy known under the name of *simplex sigillum veri*, in this case, the acceptance of a finalistic explanation of an event because it is the simplest; because the finalistic explanation satisfies a longing engendered by the primacy of finalistic

considerations for man; because, lastly, man tends to explain everything in his own image, as if that thing were human. This, however, is the fallacy of groundless extrapolation. For historical determinism extrapolates the finalistic explanation from the realm of human biography where it properly belongs, to that of cosmic history when human purposiveness is ruled out by definition. It remains a fact, however – and we acknowledge it readily – that nature and cosmos appear *as if* purposiveness is true of their unfolding in history. But this feature is never constitutive and may never be critically established. It remains a mere '*als ob*'.

In Islam, revelation is ideational and only ideational. 'Thus saith the Lord' is the only form revelation can take. Islam upholds the prophetic notion of immediate and direct revelation as given in Hebrew Scripture. 'Thus saith the Lord' means precisely what it says. For, in Islam, God does not reveal Himself. Being transcendent, He can never become the object of knowledge. But He can and does reveal His will; and this is wholly the ethically-imperative, the commandment, the law. This He reveals in the only way possible for revealing the law, namely, the discursive word. The moral law is a conceptually-communicable, ideational schema of a value-content endowed with moving appeal. Certainly, it is not an event. The event may or may not realize the moral law; but it is not itself the law.

This Islamic view of revelation, which is also that of Hebrew Scripture, does not conflict with the phenomena of responsibility, freedom and conscience. For an idea does not coerce. It 'moves'; and man may very well be, as not-be, 'moved' by the idea. An event, on the contrary is one necessarily caused by necessary causes and issuing in necessary effects. Islam therefore is safe against ever having to rely upon a deterministic theory of history in order to justify itself. It does hold, though, that God may act in history. But such a divine act it always interprets as the reward of virtue or the punishment of vice; and it explains such divine intervention in history as the necessary real connection, or causal bond, that relates the real-existential *matériaux* of moral value or disvalue, with those of happiness or suffering. The so-called

'saving acts of God' in Hebrew Scripture, Islam regards as the natural consequences of virtue and good deeds.

The notion that revelation is by event, which follows from the notions that Jesus, the 'God-man in history' is both 'the Word of God' and himself the revelation of God, further determines the Christian understanding of Hebrew election and covenant. For the Christian, Abraham's election is God's call to faith and his response is the predetermined response of faith. The patriarchal Chosen-People complex he understands as the fact that the Hebrews suffered themselves to be the tools of God's acts. Their insistence that they are a race chosen by God absolutely, i.e., for its own sake and for all time – a race chosen to be the favourite not as a reward for some virtue or worth but for its own sake – is understood by the Christian as God's faithfulness in keeping His term of the covenant, and the elect's faithfulness in being the recipient of God's election; as his insistence 'on maintaining his part of the Covenant', as one of the foremost Biblical scholars puts it, 'even when Israel had broken that Covenant'.⁷ If you, Hosea, cannot put away your wife, though unfaithful and guilty, how can I, Jahweh, put away my people, though they are unrighteous and a stiff-necked people?⁸ Indeed, they are and shall remain my chosen favourites no matter what they do. This Hebrew callousness to the moral truth that only the more virtuous may be said to be the worthier, is offensive to moral sense. Hence, the Christian does try to 'ethicize' it, as when he holds it to be an election to the onerous burden of being the messengers of God. But this rationalization falls to the ground when we consider the doctrine of the remnant – equally Biblical – which asserts that the Hebrews would remain the elect even when they have stopped 'messengering', when they have stopped being and acting as God's ambassadors to men. But just as we may not hold election to be a matter of merit when the subject has become unworthy, we may not hold that election is a matter of embassy when the subject no more acts in that capacity.⁹

The covenant is a perfectly ethical notion if only all it purports to say is the truth that if man obeys God and does the good, he would be blessed. As such, it is the Semitic way of saying that

virtue equals happiness. It lays upon man an obligation – that of obeying God, of doing the good, and upon God an expectation, if not an equally-binding obligation, that whoever obeys God and does the good will be blessed and happy. Although there is plenty of talk of 'the Covenant', yet the Hebrew Scripture covenant is nothing of the sort. It is, more properly, a promise, a one-directional favour-proffering by God upon 'His people'. This transformation of the covenant into 'the Promise' is the other side of the racialization of election.

The Qur'ān admits that God had sent His word to the Hebrews, and that many a prophet and many a man believed and did rightly, and were consequently 'blessed' and 'raised above the rest'.¹⁰ But the rest rejected God's word and were hence subject to His dire punishment.¹¹ For the covenant is a purely ethical contract, unequivocally binding upon man and God.¹² It is not denied.¹³ 'Allah made a covenant of old with the Children of Israel . . . and said: Lo! I am with you: If ye worship Me, live charitably, believe in My messengers and do their bidding – if (in short) you vest your trust in God and live according to His commandments, surely I shall remit your sins, and surely I shall bring you into gardens underneath which rivers flow.'¹⁴ The Qur'ān also awards the status of elect to the Muslims,¹⁵ but on the firm basis that the Hebrews had rejected the prophets, the messengers of God, including Jesus; and with the unequivocal understanding that God's word is a command to be realized, that if the Muslims should ever fail to fulfil that command, God will not only withdraw the trust and the election, but would destroy them and give their property as inheritance to another people more prepared to carry it out.¹⁶

It is true that in extending election from Israel to the New Israel, the Christian divests it of its Hebraic racialism and transforms it into an election by faith, and this transformation stands at the root of his doctrine of justification by faith (*Romans* 4, *Galatians* 3). In Islam, election and justification are not at all by faith, but by works. Faith in Islam is only a condition, valuable and often necessary, but not indispensable. The Qur'ān counts among the saved not only the *hanifs*, or the pre-Islamic righteous,

but many post-Islamic Christians and Jews and gives as the reason for their salvation their devoted worship of God, their humility, their charity and their good deeds.¹⁷ Islam may be said to have recaptured the pure Semitic vision, beclouded by the old Hebrew racialism as well as by the new 'Christianism', of a moral order of the universe in which every human being, regardless of his race or colour – indeed of his religion in the institutionalized sense – gets exactly what he deserves, only what his works and deeds earn for him on an absolute moral scale of justice. Certainly God may award His compassion, love and mercy to whomsoever He pleases; but it is not for man to go about the world carrying his title to paradise, as it were, in his pocket. The desperate attempt of Christian doctrine to save ethics from the sure death to which justification by faith leads it by requiring man to live the life of gratitude, i.e., of one whom God has irrevocably saved, exposes morality to the fanaticism implicit in a monistic axiology, where the value of gratitude is the only value, or to the implicit vacuity – where gratitude can mean all, any member or none of the whole realm of values, as each individual decides for himself in Protagorean relativist fashion, or the community decides for him by convention. On the other hand, the denial that God's salvation is irrevocable opens the Christian faith to the charge that salvation is not a completed historical event, but an ideational command – whether carried by the discursive word or the exemplary deed – which is granted or denied as each person fulfils or fails to fulfil the morally imperative.

Islam, therefore, approaches Hebrew Scripture with the absolute moral law as the only presupposition; and it starts right at the beginning of the Hebrew and Christian tale of election and promise. Against the arbitrary, uncaused, unjustified 'Get thee out' of *Genesis* 12, which marks the beginning of Hebrew racialist election, it explains the departure of Abraham from his people and land as the regrettable result of his dispute over their idolatry. Even so, the separation was temporary and Abraham is described as praying for his father and people that God may rightly guide them. The so-called 'Legends of Abraham' – his destruction of

the idols, his being visited by angels, his redemption from the burning fire of Nimrod – all these come only from the Qur'ān, the earliest appearance of them outside Islam being the Codex Sylvester of the *Ma'ase Abraham* which a Russian monk picked up in a thirteenth-century bazaar in Constantinople, and the more recent *Midrash Hagadol*, written in the seventeenth century and discovered in Yemen in the nineteenth.¹⁸

III

If there is to be a redeeming, evidently there must be something from which man is to be redeemed; and secondly, this something must be such that man cannot redeem himself from it by his own agency. This something must be universal and necessary; and this is precisely what Christian 'sin' is. Looking into Hebrew Scripture, the Christian discerns this universal and necessary sin in Adam.

The Christian takes Adam's disobedience to be the real and actual sin of mankind. Adam's tasting of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is declared to be man's necessary will to assert himself, to have his own way; man's knowing, to be his pride and confidence in his own capacity. The Hebrews did not understand Adam's story in this manner; and the Christian has therefore found it necessary to transfigure Adam's disobedience into 'sin'. The obligation to work and to suffer pain is hedonistically understood to mean doom and death eternal. Adam's misdemeanour is universalized as that of the whole human race.

The Christian respect for personality, with its implied personalist theory of truth, should have prescribed that the sin of Adam be the sin of Adam alone. If, on the other hand, Adam is only a symbolic figure, it is nothing but the barest assertion to claim that sin is the necessary and universal phenomenon, that it is the starting point of man's career on earth. Virtue is no less a universal phenomenon; and if it were to provide that starting point, an outlook totally different from that of Christianity would follow. Nonetheless, this Christian emphasis on sin is not without merit. Undoubtedly, sin is more often the rule than virtue. In the

matter of man's career on earth, the career of ever transcending himself in emulation of the divine, his shortcoming is far more relevant than his advantage. In battle, the enemy should occupy a peculiar category in the consciousness of general and soldier. The Christian's obsession with sin is not altogether unhealthy and has the merit of focusing attention on that which is to be overcome. But this advantage immediately turns sour if attention to sin is exaggerated, as is the case with Christian doctrine, where it becomes the first principle of creation as well as of man's moral being. However, the Christian asserts sin in order to deny it; for the Jesus-event had no rationale save the destruction of sin as a universal and primordial phenomenon, as human essence. But having denied it in the assertion that universal salvation is a *fait accompli*, the Christian has *ipso facto* forfeited his moral enthusiasm and laid wide open the gates of moral complacency. Gratitude, or the recognition that God has in fact saved him, gives man no ethic other than the obligation to give thanks and proclaim the salvation-news. That is precisely how many Christians (e.g. Karl Barth, 1886–1968) understand the moral imperative. Faced with such difficulties, the Christians interpret Adam's act in a variety of ways: Some insist that it is his knowledge of good and evil; others, that it is his desire to be like God; others, that it is his self-assertion and egotism; others more philosophic but with no little Buddhist sensitivity and existential boredom with life, that it is his very actuality and existence.¹⁹ All these views evidently imply either that man's creation was faulty or that it was undesirable. They transform man's noblest endowments – namely his knowledge and will to knowledge, his cosmic uniqueness, his will to be and to persist, his will to become like unto God, into instruments of doom.

In Islam, far from being the father of sin, Adam is the father of the prophets. He received his learning directly from God, and in this he was superior to the angels to whom he taught the 'names' (i.e., essences, definitions) of the creatures.²⁰ God commanded him to pursue the good²¹ as well as to avoid evil, the latter being the nature of the tree whose fruit he was forbidden to eat. The identification of the tree as 'the tree of life and knowledge' is

neither God's nor Adam's; but, if a Muslim may here make a guess on the basis of Christian Old Testament scholarship, the work of the priestly editors of 'J' who branded knowledge of good and evil as evil in pursuit of their will to power and in perpetration of their monopoly over man's reaching toward God. The Qur'ān calls this wrong identification a lie told by Satan in order to lure Adam, prone as he was to know and pursue the good, to transgress God's command and do evil. 'Satan', the Qur'ān says, 'enticed Adam saying, O Adam, shall I show you the tree of life and power eternal? Adam ate of the tree and committed a transgression and an evil deed. But God corrected him and he atoned and was rightly guided.'²² Adam, therefore, did commit a misdeed, namely that of thinking evil to be good, of ethical misjudgement. He was the author of the first human mistake in ethical perception, committed, with good intention, under enthusiasm for the good.²³ It was not a 'fall' but a discovery that it is possible to confuse the good with the evil, that its pursuit is neither unilateral nor straightforward.

The fact that Jesus has redeemed man not only implies a theory of man – which we have just discussed – but equally a theory of God. Jesus, for the Christian, is God; and redemption not only implies a certain kind of man, but equally a certain kind of God; a God who is so concerned about man that He would redeem him by doing what Jesus did, or by doing what He did 'in' Jesus.

Thus, the Christian looks upon the declaration of *Genesis*, 'Let us make man according to our image' and sees therein the confirmation he needs of man's fellowship with God. Man, an image of God, was created to be God's fellow in paradise. But man has sinned. God would not acquiesce in this estrangement, in this self-waste to which man has committed himself. Hence, He punished him at first; then He chased him out of paradise and inflicted upon him all sorts of afflictions. Nonetheless man continued to sin. God then decided that all creation was a mistake except for one man, Noah, and his family, and destroyed all life in a Deluge. Thereafter, touched by the 'sweet savour' of Noah's sacrifice, God vowed never to destroy life again as He had just

done. But man continued to sin. Whereupon God decided upon another course of action, the election of the Hebrews and their divinely-operated history to the end that He may Himself assume man's sin and redeem him, acting through the God-man Jesus. All this points to the fact that God is man's partner and fellow, and man is God's partner and fellow, each of whom is indispensable for the other.

This Christian fellowship of man with God, though drawn from a Hebrew Scriptural account, puts God in a position irreconcilable with His omniscience and omnipotence. Nonetheless, it contains a great deal of truth. For despite the context in which the Christian understands it, man's 'fellowship' with God is an expression of the rapport which exists between God's commandment, the ethically imperative, or value, and man. This rapport consists in that the ought-to-be, the modality of the ideally-existent value which possesses genuine moving power and being, is beamed towards man. It also consists in the capacity of the latter alone in creation to grasp that ought-beam and fall under its determination. Man's capacity to know and to do the good, or God's will, is his 'divinity'. God's moving power, directed to man, is his 'humanity'. But it should not be forgotten that this 'human divinity' and 'divine humanity' are not real facts, but mere modalities of real facts. The ought-to-be is a necessary modality of value; it may not be called a 'need' unless value, or divinity, is hopelessly anthropomorphic, and it is crude to speak of it as a 'fellowship', or to ascribe to it the assumption of man's 'guilt', to 'crucify' it, etc. which the Christian does.

In Islam, God created man for the specific purpose of carrying out a trust in this world, a trust so great that the angels, to whom it was first offered, turned away in terror.²⁴ This trust is the perfecting of an imperfect world deliberately created imperfect so that in the process of a human perfecting of it, ethical values would be realized which otherwise (i.e. in a necessarily perfectable or created-perfect world) would be ruled out *ex hypothesi*. God, therefore, is not man's fellow, but his Transcendent Creator and First Mover whose moving does stand *en rapport* with man's capacity for being moved. The nearness of a First

Mover, of value as a genuine entelechy, is beyond question. But it is not the nearness of a 'fellow' who is willing to do his partner's supreme duty, as in Christianity. Rather, it is the nearness of a modality of our knowledge of the being of the Godhead, the nearness of the ethically imperative.

IV

In conclusion, we may therefore say that the Christian approach to Hebrew Scripture is dogmatic; i.e. governed by the desire to confirm articles of the Christian creed; whereas the Islamic approach is ethical, i.e., governed by absolute and immutable ethical laws, without regard to dogma. In consequence of his approach being dogmatic, the Christian is compelled to resort to a deterministic view of man and history, to an allegorical interpretation of unequivocal texts and to glossing over accounts and narratives of human conduct which no worthy morality can accept. *Per contra*, in consequence of his approach being ethical, the Muslim is compelled to separate the ethically valid from the perverse in Hebrew Scripture, for only the former he can call the Word of God. But Hebrew Scripture does not lose by having any of its parts demoted, as it were, from the status of revelation to that of human editing. Unlike revelation, human writing is capable of having both the good and the evil. On the contrary, rather than losing, Hebrew Scripture gains through such an attitude. Such discipline known as Old Testament criticism which has saved Hebrew Scripture from the slow but sure process of repudiation by Christians of the last two centuries, by correcting its claims, reconciling its contradictions, and reconstructing its history on a sounder foundation. The first principle of this discipline has been the Qur'anic principle that not all the Old Testament is God's word, but only some; that much of it – Christian scholars go to the extreme of claiming that all of it – is the work of editors and redactors of all sorts of affiliation.

Furthermore, because of his approach, the Christian is faced with the insurmountable problem of the *Vergegenwärtigung* (i.e., the representation or making contemporary and relevant) of

Hebrew Scripture, of the Old Testament. For being a revelation in events, the relevance of past events for the present may always be questioned. The Islamic approach, which reads in Hebrew Scripture immutable though often violated ethical principles, and in Hebrew history some violation as well as some fulfilment of these principles, stands in no need of such *Vergegenwärtigung*. Ethical principles are always contemporary. But for the Christian, the problem is so great that nobody has so far given a satisfactory answer, while the Christian masses become ever more alienated from Hebrew Scripture. Indeed, *Vergegenwärtigung* is such an insoluble problem that men of the calibre of G. von Rad,²³ Karl Barth²⁴ and Martin Noth²⁵ have spoken of a solution by proclamation. We may 'vergegenwärtigen' the Old Testament, they tell us, by proclaiming its news, its events, 'just as we would read a sheaf of news reports and pass them on just as they are'.²⁶ 'Proclaim the Old Testament as you please', a friendly warner may say in this connection, 'the masses of Christendom will continue to give you an unsilenceable retort: So what?'

Notes

1. W.F. Albright has noted that the Hebrews conceived of their god as if he were their relative, and they were his brothers, uncles, nephews and kinsmen; that no such relationship was possible for any person that did not already belong to their order (*From the Stone Age to Christianity*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1940, pp. 185 ff.).

2. I Samuel 26: 19; II Kings 5: 17.

3. See the informative discussion in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, s.v. Names, Divine Names.

4. Against this it is often contended that the Old Testament does contain evidence of a universalist divine providence in the *Book of Jonah*, in *Amos* 9, *Isaiah* 15 and 19. However, a careful reading of the *Book of Jonah* reveals that the significance of the story does not lie in what God did to Nineveh but in the Jewish attitude to Nineveh represented not only by the man-in-the-street but by no less a man than the 'prophet' Jonah himself. In *Amos* 9: 7 it is claimed that God has done as much for Israel as He did for the Philistines and the Syrians – a wrong and perverse opinion. It is wrong because rather than emphasize what God did to the non-Jews, the whole purport of verse 7 as well as the first half of chapter 9, is to show that

Jahweh is mighty enough to destroy Israel. As evidence of this divine might the Old Testament cites what Jahweh did to the non-Jews. Finally, Isaiah's 'Blessed be Egypt, My people, and Assyria, the work of My hands', cannot be taken seriously. The Egypt and Assyria which are here blessed had been totally destroyed (Isaiah 19: 1 ff.), lost their spirit and purpose (*ibid.*, 19: 3, 10); changed their spirit for a 'perverse' one (*ibid.*, 19: 14) and become the city of destruction unto whom 'the land of Judah shall be a terror' (*ibid.*, 19: 17). Furthermore they had been repopulated by Israelites (*ibid.*, 19: 4-10), changed their language for that of Canaan, and now cooperate together in the service of an imperial Israel (*ibid.*, 19: 23-4). It takes a logic quite unique to make white out of this Isaiahian jet-black.

5. Isaiah 49: 22-3. For the Jews, Hebrew Scripture is the yet-unfinished record of Hebrew history.

6. 'God . . . can only reveal Himself perfectly in perfect personality . . . (and) . . . The word of God is mediated to us through the instrument of their (the redactors of Hebrew Scripture) personality' H.H. Rowley, *The Relevance of the Bible* (London: J. Clarke & Co., 1941), p. 25.

7. S.B. Frost, *The Beginning of the Promise* (London: SPCK, 1960), p. 46; Norman Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: The Epworth Press, 1944, eighth impression, 1960), p. 140.

8. Hosea 1: 10; 11: 8-9; 13: 14. The Jews understand by Deuteronomy 14: 1, that even when the children's conduct is unfilial, the filial relation remains (and) 'sinful offspring are still children (of God)' (*Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1941, Vol. III, p. 167, quoting R. Meir, c. 1220-93). Also R. Johanan commented thus on Hosea's inability to repudiate his prostitute-wife despite her misconduct: 'If you [God must have argued with Hosea] cannot put away your wife of whose fidelity you are uncertain . . . how can I reject Israel who are my children? . . .' (*ibid.*, p. 168). In an argument of unparalleled intellectual bravado, Th. C. Vriezen distinguishes an 'empirical Israel' from what he presumably takes to be an absolute or transcendental Israel. 'Even if God rejects the empirical Israel in its entirety for some time', he writes, 'that does not mean that Israel is rejected altogether . . . Israel was never rejected absolutely . . . This implies the continuous faithfulness of the electing God rather than the possibility of definite rejection by God of what He has once elected . . . As far as Israel is concerned rejection only exists partially and temporarily as punishment. Cf. my *Die Erwählung Israels*, pp. 98 ff.' (*An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1958, p. 142). Walter Eichrodt is so convinced of the absoluteness of Israel's election that he takes the Hosean passage in question as evidence that the Old Testament God is no capricious despot 'striking out in blind rage', as if for Him to reject Israel when she broke the covenant, would have been tantamount to 'acting in blind rage' (*Theology of the Old Testament*, Vol. I, London: SCM Press, 1960, p. 265).

9. For a further discussion of this view see this author's review of S.B. Frost, *op. cit.*, in *Christian Outlook* (Montreal), No. 1960.

10. *al-Baqarah* 2: 47; *al-A'raf* 7: 168.

11. *al-A'raf* 7: 100-2.

12. *al-Baqarah* 2: 40.

13. *al-Baqarah* 2: 63, 84; *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 187; *al-Mā'idah* 5: 70; *al-A'raf* 7: 172, etc.

14. *al-Mā'idah* 5: 12.

15. *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 104, 110.

16. *Muhammad* 47: 8; *al-Taubah* 9: 39.

17. 'And Lo! of the People of the Book there are some who believe in God and that which is revealed unto you and that which was revealed unto them, humbling themselves before God. They purchase not a trifling gain at the price of God's revelation. Verily, their reward is with their Lord' (*Āl 'Imrān* 3: 199; see also *al-Baqarah* 2: 162).

18. It was in the eleventh century that Hebrew literature acquired a great mass of material from Arabic sources. Nissim of Kairawan, author of the famous *Sefer Ma'asoth*, combined stories from the Haggadah, the Bidpai Fables which he took over complete in their Arabic title of 'Kalilah wa Dimnah' with Qur'anic narratives, *A Thousand and One Nights* stories, etc. Nonetheless, the *Sefer Ma'asoth* does not even have a *Ma'ase Abraham*, which must have been a later addition.

19. An example of the last instance is the case of Paul Tillich (1886-1965) who understands the fall as 'transition from essence to existence' but upholds the Christian prejudice that such transition is unworthy and condemnable in order to make room for salvation (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, pp. 29-31). When finally salvation did come through Jesus, it did not transform man back into essence, but merely taught him to regard existence no more as condemnable. True, existence as 'estrangement' had its marks (sin, hubris, concupiscence) which, Jesus had shown, could be surmounted (*ibid.*, pp. 125-6). Nonetheless, the saved man is not one standing outside existence, but in existence surmounting its antinomies and disvalues (*ibid.*, pp. 6 ff.). But in this case, the definition of the fall as transition from essence to existence has availed nothing.

20. Qur'ān, *al-Baqarah* 2: 30-3. The Qur'ān does not read in Hebrew history any history-determinism. The so-called saving acts of God, and above all, the Exodus with all its surrounding mystery, are all there. But they are acts of God only inasmuch as they are the natural consequences of virtue and good deeds. All these are metaphorically called the rewards of those who remained steadfast in their worship and service of God and were persecuted and exploited by a tyrant Pharaoh. The blessing of Abraham with children and land, the Exodus and subsequent guidance and blessing of the Hebrews in Sinai and their entry into possession of Palestine were, according to the Qur'ān, not part of an operated history, but God's part of the covenant, the blessing or happiness which is the

necessary consequence of virtue. The same justification is applied by the Qur'ân to David's victory over Goliath, as well as to the glories of Solomon's reign. In no case does the Qur'ân compromise the freedom or responsibility of these men by implying a divine operation of the historical nexus (*al-Muzzammil* 73: 15; *al-Qaṣaṣ* 28: 3 ff.; *Ṭā Hā* 20: 77-83; etc.). What is forgotten here is that while an idea may be caused to appear, as the notion of 'Koh amar Jahweh' proves, it is of its very nature not to determine the addressee, whose doings remain his own choice and responsibility. Thus saith the Lord' can never imply a historical determinism such as Hebrew history is here claimed to be. Once more, the difference between Christianity and Islam is precisely this, that in the former, revelation is an event, in the latter, it is an idea. The former sees in Hebrew history a series of revelation-events which could not have not-happened (a God-authored event is by definition something necessarily causing necessary effects and is necessarily caused by necessary causes) and the latter, a series of revelation ideas which were freely accepted by some and freely rejected by others. The 'Promise' of Hebrew Scripture, or the unearned blessing of any man or people, the Qur'ân utterly rejects as inconsonant with God's nature and His justice; the Muslims being no more unfit for such favouritism than any other people.

21. Qur'ân, *Ṭā Hā* 20: 116-19.

22. *Ṭā Hā* 20: 120-2.

23. Hence, God's admonition to Adam: 'You (Satan and Adam) shall leave paradise, enemies one to the other, until guidance (i.e., the guarantee against perceptual errors in matters ethical) comes to you from Me' (*Ṭā Hā* 20: 123-4).

24. Qur'ân, *al-Aḥzāb* 33: 72.

25. G. von Rad, *Das Formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuchs* (Stuttgart: B.W.A.N.T., 1938), pp. 18 ff.

26. Karl Barth, 'Das Christliche Verständnis der Offenbarung', in *Theologische Existenz Heute*, 12 (1948), pp. 9, 13 ff., quoted by Martin Noth, below, n. 27.

27. Martin Noth, 'Interpretation of the Old Testament, I: The "Representation" of the Old Testament in Proclamation', *Interpretation* (January 1961), pp. 50-60. In this article Noth reviews the history of the problem and discusses the views of Karl Barth as well as G. von Rad.

28. The words are Karl Barth's, cited by Noth, *op. cit.*

PART II

Islam and Other Faiths

I. The World's Need for Humane Universalism

This century, the fourteenth AH and twentieth CE, has witnessed the growth among humans of a new awareness, namely, that mankind must live together, every group of it interdependent with all the others. The old clichés of inter-human relationships which dominated the last half millennium – master-subject, faithful-heathen, *colon-indigene*, home-overseas, we natives-they foreigners – have broken down and are being constantly elbowed out by the new. The unity of mankind is being felt, with ever-growing intensity, around the globe. The almost universal self-identification of the world with the Algerians and Vietnamese in their past struggle, and with the Palestinians in their continuing struggle, for human dignity, is positive evidence of this new awareness. Violation of the human rights of the Algerians, Vietnamese and Palestinians has itself stirred up as well as confirmed these rights in the consciousness of mankind.

This new awareness is practical, oriented toward cases of violation and fulfilment; but it has no clear ideational base, no system of first principles which everybody can call his own. The lack is in our contemporary human consciousness. Once upon a time, the Western world recognized such a base in the Enlight-

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enment. Nineteenth-century Romanticism, and Western failure of nerve in defending the rationalist universal ideal against its attackers allowed the gains to be dissipated. A temporary revival was brought about by the world's fight against fascism in World War II. It gave us the forgotten Atlantic Charter, the United Nations Charter and the Bill of Human Rights, to which many nations of the world still pay little more than lip-service. Colonialism's last battles, neo-colonialism, the Cold War and the epidemic spread of nationalist particularism combined to neutralize the recent gains; and the voices calling for one humane world-order were muted by the strongest wave of scepticism and cynicism since the last days of Athens and Rome. Fortunately, all these forces, including the mightiest, namely modern scepticism, have not dissuaded modern man from recognizing humanity in all men, and defending its rights on behalf of them; this in spite of the fact that scepticism denied all principles on the basis of which this humane universalism was based in the past and affirmed no new idea instead. Analytical philosophizing and positivism stood ready to destroy any system of ideas capable of supporting any humane universalism. And while existentialism hesitates between nihilism and another round of Germanic idealism, Christian theologians continue to expend their energies on accommodating Christian dogma to the intellectual vicissitudes or fashions of the various schools of the day.

There is in consequence an emptiness in the world calling for the highest intellectual vision. Mankind's practical awareness needs to be articulated and given a permanent place in man's system of evident truths. If we are to appropriate the new truth, teach it in our schools and prevent our children from having to acquire the vision through tragic experience as our generation did, and if we are to convince the billions of its validity and timeliness, we have to give it some creative thinking. Fortunately, Islam presents us with an excellent base, rational and critical, as well as tested by fourteen centuries of history. Wherever the Muslims followed and applied its principles, their success has been spectacular. Nothing in mankind's religious history is comparable to it. Our need for a sure and promising foundation

on which to build a world-order of human relations, at once humane and universalist, imposes upon us to listen, to consider and to learn from Islam.

II. The Lesson of Islam

A. The Essence

Islam's view of other faiths flows from the essence of its religious experience. This essence is critically knowable. It is not the subject of 'paradox', nor of 'continuing revelation', nor the object of construction or reconstruction by Muslims. It is as clearly comprehensible to the man of today as it was to those of Arabia of the Prophet's day (570-632 CE) because the categories of grammar, lexicography, syntax and redaction of the Qur'ānic text, and those of Arabic consciousness embedded in the Arabic language, have not changed through the centuries. This phenomenon is indeed unique; for Arabic is the only language which has remained the same for nearly two millennia, the last fourteen centuries of which being certainly due to the Holy Qur'ān.¹ Nobody has denied that Islam has a recognizable essence, readable in the Holy Qur'ān.² For Muslims, this essence has been on every lip and in every mind, every hour of every day.

The essence of Islam is *tawhīd* or *Lā ilāha illa 'llāh*, the witnessing that there is no god but God (may He be Glorified and Exalted). Brief as it is, this witness packs into itself four principles which constitute the whole essence and ultimate foundation of the religion.

First, that there is no god but God means that reality is dual, consisting of a natural realm, the realm of creation, and a transcendent realm, the Creator. This principle distinguishes Islam from Ancient Egypt and Greece where reality was taken to be monophysite, consisting of one realm, nature or creation, parts or all of which were apotheosized. Greek and Egyptian gods were projections of various components of nature idealized beyond their created empirical creaturely naturalness. *Tawhīd* distinguishes Islam from the religions of India where reality is

also monophysite, but where the natural realm is taken to be the transcendent realm itself but in a state of ephemeral objectification or individuation. Finally, *tauhid* distinguishes Islam from trinitarian Christianity where the dualism of Creator and creature is maintained but where it is combined with a divine immanentism in human nature in justification of the incarnation. For *tauhid* requires that neither nature be apotheosized nor transcendent God be objectified, the two realities ever remaining ontologically disparate.

Second, that the one and only God is God means that He is related to what is not God as its God; that is, as its Creator or ultimate cause, its master or ultimate end. Creator and creature, therefore, *tauhid* asserts, are relevant to each other regardless of their ontological disparate, which is not affected by the relation. The transcendent Creator, being cause and final end of the natural creature, is the ultimate Master Whose will is the religious and moral imperative. The divine will is commandment and law, the ought of all that is, knowable by the direct means of revelation, or the indirect means of rational and/or empirical analysis of what is. Without a knowable content, the divine will would not be normative or imperative, and hence would not be the final end of the natural; for if the transcendent Creator is not the final end of His own creature, creation must be not the purposive event consonant with divine nature but a meaningless happening to Him, a threat to His own ultimacy and transcendence.

Third, *tauhid* or, as we have seen, that God is the final end of the creature, means that man is capable of action, that creation is malleable or capable of receiving man's action, and human action on malleable nature, resulting in a transformed creation is the moral end of religion. Contrary to the claims of other religions, nature is not fallen, evil, a sort of *Untergang* of the absolute; nor is the absolute an apotheosis of it. Both are real and both are good; the Creator being the *summum bonum* or supreme good and the creature being intrinsically good and potentially better as it is transformed by human action into the pattern the Creator has willed for it. We have already seen that knowledge of the divine will is possible for man; and through revelation and science such

knowledge is actual. The prerequisites of the transformation of creation into the likeness of the divine pattern are hence all, but for human resolve and execution, fulfilled and complete.

Fourth, *tauhid* means that man, alone among all the creatures, is capable of action as well as free to act or not to act. This freedom vests him with a distinguishing quality, namely responsibility. It casts upon his action its moral character; for the moral is precisely that action which is done in freedom, i.e., done by an agent who is capable of doing, as well as of not doing, it. This kind of action, moral action, is the greater portion of the divine will. Being alone capable of it, man is a higher creature, endowed with the cosmic significance of that through whose agency alone is the greater part of the divine will to be actualized in space-time. Man's life on earth, therefore, is especially meaningful and cosmically significant. As Allah has put it in the Holy Qur'an, man is God's *khalifah*, or vicegerent on earth.¹ It is of the nature of moral action that its fulfilment be not equivalent to its non-fulfilment, that man's exercise of his freedom in actualizing the divine imperative be not without difference. Hence, another principle is necessary, whereby successful moral action would meet with happiness and its opposite with unhappiness. Otherwise it would be all one for man whether he acts, or does not act, morally. Indeed, this consideration makes judgement necessary, in which the total effect of one's lifetime activity is assessed and its contribution to the total value of the cosmos is acknowledged, imbalances in the individual's life are redressed and his achievement is distinguished from the non-achievement of others. This is what 'The Day of Judgement' and 'Paradise and Hell' are meant to express in religious language.

B. Implications for Other Faiths

Tauhid, the essence of religious experience in Islam, carries a number of implications for the theory of God, the theory of revelation, the theory of man, the theory of society. Every one of these carries in turn implications for the place of other faiths in Islam's consideration.

1. *Theory of God.* Islam's insistence on the absolute unity and transcendence of God is an affirmation of God's lordship over all men. To hold God as Creator means that all men are His creatures. The measure of His absoluteness as Creator is at once the measure of the creature-likeness of all creatures. In being creaturely, they are all one though they may be distinguished among one another. But *vis-à-vis* God, they are all one and the same.

As human creatures, therefore, all men are God's vicegerents on earth. All men stand absolutely on a par under the obligation to fulfil the divine will and are judged on a scale of justice that is absolute for one and all. God's transcendence does not allow discrimination between the creatures as such. Therefore, God could not have given any special status to any person or group. His love, providence, care for and judgement of all men must be one if His transcendence is not to be compromised. Certainly, men receive differing judgements because their individual merit and demerit are different, and these in turn are different because its endeavours, capacities, and achievements are different. But God will not have with any human being a relationship to which every other human being does not stand equally entitled. Thus Islam knows no theory of election, not even an election of Muslims, such as Judaism teaches for the Jews, under which the Jew remains God's elect even if he goes astray, indeed even if he apostatizes.⁴ In Islam, all men, Muslims and non-Muslims, stand to God in identically the same relation, i.e., they fall under the same imperative and are judged indiscriminately by the same law.⁵ God's covenant is one and the same with all men. It is not a 'Promise' but a two-way contract in which man obeys and God rewards or man disobeys and God punishes. Because Allah is absolutely One and Transcendent, the non-Muslim is not a 'gentile', a 'goy', an 'estranged' or 'lesser' human being in any way, but a being who is as much the object of divine concern as the Muslim, as much *mukallaf* or subject of moral responsibility as the Muslim.

2. *Theory of Revelation.* In Islam the divine will, the ought or content of the religious and moral imperative, is knowable

directly through revelation or indirectly through science. Revelation is not a privilege peculiar to the Muslims, but a blessing granted to all mankind. This is not to argue that the content of prophecy is aimed at mankind which is especially true in the case of Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) but that the phenomenon of prophecy is common to and present in every people and nation. Allah has said: 'There was no people without a [prophet] warner',⁶ and that 'We have sent no Prophet but that We have revealed to him that men should worship and serve Allah and avoid all evil ways.'⁷ Revelation, therefore, is a common prerogative of mankind; and so is its content, the divine will, the ought or religious and moral imperative; though this does not preclude Allah's revelation of messages addressed to some people alone, in their own language and for their own peculiar benefit.⁸ The non-Muslim is hence not underprivileged by comparison to the Muslim in this regard. He has been as much the object and subject of revelation as the Muslim, though, unlike the Muslim, he may have dissipated, lost, tampered with or confused what has been revealed to him. Universalism of prophecy follows from God's transcendence.⁹ Revelation being an act of mercy, necessary for certain knowledge of the divine will, it would not be consonant with divine transcendence to give it to some and to deny it to others. Instead of being the forsaken who benefits from what has been gifted to others, the non-Muslim is the proud partner who is as much the benefactor of this divine gift as the Muslim.

As to science, the indirect way of learning the divine will, its prerequisites are the senses, intellectual curiosity and the will to research and discover, the availability of data and communicability of experience, memory and the preservation of knowledge, reason and understanding or the capacity to grasp, synthesize and develop knowledge. All these prerequisites are indiscriminately gifted to all mankind. No people or group may lay exclusive claim to them. Great in God's eyes are those who seek, promote, keep and distribute knowledge of the truth.¹⁰ Education is one of the greatest Islamic duties, and knowledge of the truth is one of the greatest virtues. Every Muslim stands

under the obligation to develop his own faculties as well as those of humanity, to gather all existent knowledge regardless of source and to disseminate such knowledge to all mankind. Every piece of knowledge achieved and established becomes the property of mankind. No one has exclusive title to it.

The content of science is the pattern God has implanted in creation. It is His will insofar as it is relevant to the creature in question. The divine will in nature is natural law. It is the pattern of being peculiar to each creature, which realizes itself necessarily, thus constituting natural law.¹¹ The human psyche, human consciousness and personality, the human group and the patterns of its political, economic, sociological and cultural behaviour are all equally subject to this comprehensive 'science'. So is moral knowledge also discernible, knowledgeable through a 'scientific' (that is, rational) analysis of moral phenomena. Such knowledge is wisdom. Its acquisition is especially meritorious; its dissemination as free counsel and advice for the sake of God earns for its author no less than Paradise.

Here, as in the science of nature, the non-Muslim stands absolutely on a par with the Muslim. Each is by nature equally capable of it, equally obliged to honour it and equally deserving if he offered it to all men. The only differences allowed are those which pertain to personal aptitudes which may vary from subject to subject as widely among Muslims as among non-Muslims. Also legitimate are differences in the personal zeal and application of the pursuer of wisdom, the personal purity of motive and intention in its acquisition and dissemination; but of these, the Muslim is, again by nature, as capable as the non-Muslim. In themselves, these differences have nothing to do with adherence or otherwise to the Islamic faith, though such adherence may consolidate the wisdom and add to the merit of the subject. Universal egalitarianism in man's capacity to discover and recognize God's will in creation is a consequence of God's will itself. For a divine will that is beyond human grasp and understanding will either remain ignored or be followed in puppet-like fashion. In either case, the requirements of morality would not be met and, in consequence, the divine will would

not be adequately realized. Indeed, the most important part of it, namely the moral, would remain unrealized. A frustrated God would not be God.¹²

An atheist may ask: May not the good – whether as moral norm, or as natural law – be discovered, pursued and observed for its own sake, rather than as divine will? Certainly, we may answer; for man's innate capacity for science and wisdom may be developed and successfully exercised without the realization that the truth and the good being discovered are the will of God. That is why God has implanted in all men yet another faculty, one especially designed to recognize God as transcendent Creator of all that is. This is the *sensus numinis*, the faculty by which man apprehends the sacred quality or dimension of reality. Its insights are the raw material, the data *sui generis*, on which the mind can build the system of ideas known as religious knowledge. It is an innate faculty, a natural endowment by which man knows or comes to know God. The Holy Qur'ān asserts that there is no creature but that which in its own peculiar way, recognizes its Creator and serves Him.¹³

Recognition of God and awareness of His existence, of His transcendent creatorship, is therefore the prerogative of all men. It is a universal birthright, guaranteeing man's consciousness of God to all. Here too, the Muslim stands at no advantage when compared with the non-Muslim. Both are equally endowed and equally capable since religion itself is rooted in their innate capacity to sense the holy.

C. The Theory of Man

(a) *Man's Innate 'Perfections'*. *Tawhīd*, or the essence of religious experience in Islam, means that man is a creature upon whom falls the obligation to worship or serve God, i.e., to actualize the divine will. This is man's *raison d'être*.¹⁴ He was created for no other purpose than to serve God. It follows from this that God would create a capable servant if He is not to be frustrated, or to work in vain. That is why God had implanted in man a *sensus numinis*, a moral faculty and placed him in a

theatre – the cosmos – capable of receiving His action, of being remoulded in accordance with His plan.

From this it follows that man is not fallen, but innocent; that far from creating him hopelessly impotent to fulfil His will and thus to achieve salvation, God has created him in the best of forms and endowed him with all the favourable prerogatives mentioned above.¹⁵ Man stands in no predicament except that of serving God; and this demands of him positive, affirmative action designed to remould himself and creation. Far from beginning his life on earth with a minus, man starts his life with a definite and significant plus. Islam entertains no ideal of fall, of original sin, or of a predicament from which man may not extricate himself by his own effort.¹⁶ Allah says in His Holy Book: 'We have created man in perfect form and breathed into him of Our spirit.'¹⁷ The Muslim, therefore, does not look upon the non-Muslim as a '*massa peccata*', a fallen, hopeless creature, but as a perfect man capable by himself of achieving the highest righteousness. He recognizes in him, as non-Muslim, not an incomplete human being, but a perfect one, possessing high dignity which belongs to him as man.

(b) *Ur-Religion or Religio Naturalis*. Coupled with this dignity is another of even greater importance, namely, that the non-Muslim possesses what Islam calls *dīn al-ḥiṭrah* or natural religion.¹⁸ This consists of the unerring discoveries of the *sensus numinis* by which man recognizes God as transcendent and holy, and hence worthy of adoration. This is not a repetition of man's natural capacity to know through science. It is a new knowledge, a knowledge of the Holy, of the numinous, of God. This natural vision of God, or *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*, stands to be enriched by man's other natural knowledge, i.e., the discoveries of his theoretical and axiological consciousness. Man's reason and sense of value stand ready to enlighten his service to God. Both faculties, the numinous and the theoretical-axiological, belong to man by virtue of his humanity. As he grows older, the cumulative products of science and morals are his as shortcuts to certainty of what the divine imperative is.¹⁹ Islam reminds him, however, that *dīn al-*

ḥiṭrah, or *religio naturalis*, which Muslims and non-Muslims possess by birth, is always to be kept distinct from the religious traditions of history. This distinction makes it possible for him to approach his or any religious tradition critically, yet religiously; and it constitutes a permanent source of reform and creative dynamism for the historical religion. What God has implanted in human nature, namely the recognition of His transcendence, unity, holiness and ultimate goodness is prior to any tradition. Hence, *dīn al-ḥiṭrah* is, properly speaking, *Ur-Religion*, or original religion. Its possession by every man, regardless of the religious tradition or culture in which he was born or nursed, defines his humanity and casts upon him a very special dignity. It entitles him to full membership in the religious community of man, the universal brotherhood under God.²⁰

Islam calls this *dīn al-ḥiṭrah* or *Ur-Religion*, 'Islam'. It identifies itself completely with it, subjects itself totally to its principles and dictates. In Islam's view, the historical religions are outgrowths of *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*, containing within them differing amounts or degrees of it.²¹ It explains their differences from *dīn al-ḥiṭrah* as the accumulations, figurizations, interpretations or transformations of history, i.e., of place, time, culture, leadership and other particular conditions.²² Islam therefore agrees that all religions are religions of God, issuing from and based upon *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*, and representing varying degrees of acculturation or attunement with history.²³ In a moment of high vision, the Prophet Muḥammad said: 'All men are born Muslims (in the sense in which Islam is equated with *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*): it is his parents that christianize or judaize him.'²⁴ In the same sense, the Holy Qur'ān named the adherents of *dīn al-ḥiṭrah* '*ḥanīfs*' and declared the ancient prophets of God to be *ḥunafā'* (pl. of *ḥanīf*), i.e., recipient of revelation from God confirming their natural religion or *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*.²⁵

In addition to the dignity conferred upon him by his reason, moral sense, and the *sensus numinis*, all of which he shares equally with the Muslim, the non-Muslim enjoys the Muslim's respect as carrier of *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*, the religion of God, as well as carrier of his own religious tradition as one based on *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*. His

Christianity or Judaism or Hinduism or Buddhism is hence to the Muslim, *de jure*, i.e., legitimate religion despite its divergence from traditional Islam. Indeed, the Muslim welcomes the non-Muslim as his brother in faith, in *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*, which is the more basic and the more important. The Muslim as well as the non-Muslim are hence members of one family, and their religious differences are domestic, i.e., referable to, and corrigible in terms of a common parental origin which is *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*.

(c) *Inmate World Ecumenism*. Islam's discovery of *dīn al-ḥiṭrah* and its vision of it as the base of all historical religion is a breakthrough of tremendous importance in inter-religious relations. For the first time it has become possible for an adherent of one religion to tell an adherent of another religion: 'We are both equal members of a universal religious brotherhood. Both of our traditional religions are *de jure*, for they have both issued from and are based upon a common source, the religion of God which He has implanted equally in both of us, upon *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*.²⁶ Rather than seek to find out how much your religion agrees with mine, if at all, let us both see how far both our religious traditions agree with *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*, the original and first religion. Rather than assume that each of our religions is divine as it stands today, let us both, cooperatively wherever possible, try to trace the historical development of our religions and determine precisely how and when and where each has followed and fulfilled or transcended and deviated from, *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*. Let us look into our holy writ and other religious texts and try to discover what change has befallen them, or been reflected in them, in history.' Islam's breakthrough is thus the first call to scholarship in religion, to critical analysis of religious texts, of the claim of such texts to revelation status. It is the first call to the discipline of 'history of religion' because it was the first to assume that religion had a history, that each religion has undergone a development which constitutes that history.

Islam puts the lowest premium on the 'act of faith', or self-identification with a religious tradition. Unlike Augustinian and Lutheran Christianity which makes salvation a function of faith

and assigns little or no value to works, Islam assigns to the confession of faith the value of a condition, only a condition. Unlike the act of faith in Christianity, which is personal and secret,²⁷ works are public. Islam not only acclaims good works wherever and by whomever they are done, it regards them as the only justification in the eye of God and warns that not an iota of good work or of mischief will be lost on the Day of Reckoning. The non-Muslim therefore has the public record of works he has done to justify him in Muslim eyes; indeed, to establish him as a man of great piety and saintliness. For, in Islam, works earn merit with God regardless of the religious adherence of their authors.²⁸ Moreover, salvation consists of nothing more than such merit as the good works earn. The act of faith is itself a work which is added and whose inclusion affects the whole. But the *ḥanīf*, who has never heard of the revelation of Muḥammad, but who has observed *dīn al-ḥiṭrah* and done good works, is as much saved and the occupant of paradise as the one who did, who believed and achieved identically the same record of 'good works'.²⁹ Finally, it must be remarked that the nature of 'meritorious work' in Islam has nothing to do with sacraments since Islam has none, or with secret personal acts of devotion since all of Islam's devotions are public and communal.³⁰ Islam's ethic being totally world-affirming, positive, of-the-world and governed by public law, the non-Muslim has as much potential and room for meritorious works as the Muslim. No religion allows its adherent to call the non-adherent a better adherent to itself than the professed adherent, and do so religiously, except Islam and, perhaps philosophical Buddhism, which has relatively few adherents and no religious community anyway.

4. *Theory of Society*. Islam has defined the will of God, the norms of human conduct and ends of human desire, in terms of values which are societal. The ummah, or Islamic society, is therefore a *conditio sine qua non*, necessary and indispensable if the Muslim is to achieve the divine imperative.³¹ This necessity of society derives partly from Islam's world affirmation, and partly from its insistence that ethics is one of action rather than

intention. Both of these considerations require the Muslim to engage himself in the very fabric of society and discourage – nay, condemn – individualism and isolationism.³² Islam condemned monasticism as an unfortunate invention of some Christians, not commanded by God.³³ Islam demanded that Islamic life take place in the midst of the rough and tumble of village, city, state and community. The ummah, furthermore, is not a mystical body, but a concrete real and political body, membership of which cannot be exercised except in the open and under the vigilant eye of public laws and institutions. This being the case, one would think that the non-Muslim is a 'gentile' or 'goy' who has no shadow of a chance for admission and with whom no cooperation with the ummah is possible.

In fact, the opposite is the case. We have already seen that divine transcendence implies that all men are equally creaturely, and hence, that nothing differentiates them from one another except personal achievement. All men are thus equally the object of the Muslim's attention, care and actual salvific work. The Muslim cannot rest until all men have achieved the divine will to the full extent of their personal abilities; until every inch of ground in creation has been transformed by his effort into the fullest possible actualization of the divine pattern. The Muslim is thus a world-missionary, a world-scout, a world-guardian and a world-worker. He not only calls men to God but carries them there if they are lethargic, for his life-purpose is to get them there. Only strategy decides the priorities of his conduct, the nearer being always first entitled to his energies; but the most distant being finally just as entitled to those energies as the nearest. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (c. 581–644) used to worry that he, personally, would have no excuse before God on the Day of Judgement that an unrepaired pot-hole in the pavement of the farthest village road may have caused a beast of burden to fall and injure itself. Knowing human nature for what it is, Islam stressed the importance of the relative, the neighbour, the compatriot, and commanded the Muslim never to forsake him but to give him the first and most tender loving care.³⁴ It even legislated that care by fixing inheritance and alimony rights to

the proven relative regardless of real distance in space or of biological descent as long as he establishes absence of a supporter nearer to him in either respect than the defendant. The reality of the forces of nepotism, tribalism, ethnocentrism, and nationalism in human conduct is recognized, and a place in the general scheme is given them. Thus they are brought under the law and are not allowed to dominate. Their worth is a deduction from the general relevance of all men in the Muslim's scheme of action. Indeed, Allah has condemned to eternal fire the person who stops his concern and work at the frontier of neighbour, relative, tribesman, or compatriot. God's transcendence implies the equality of all men; His divine mastery or lordship implies that all men should be the object of the Muslim's love, concern and action.³⁵

While it is morally proper that nature everywhere should be the object of the Muslim's remoulding and transformation, it is morally insufficient that all men should be the object of that care. Certainly, a vast proportion of humanity would benefit most by no more involvement in the cosmic process than by being the object of the loving energies of the Muslim cosmic worker. But the moral sense of man and the divine will never be satisfied by such involvement alone. Man is a moral subject. As such, whatever happens to him is of no moral worth, despite its utilitarian worth, unless it happens by his own personal and free decision. *Dār al-Islām* (The House of Islam) will therefore seek to envelop the world and to transform it and mankind into a perfect actualization of the divine pattern or will. But it will be morally of little value unless mankind is called to the task and convinced of its moral and utilitarian value; unless mankind freely decides to have the job done and participate in it, each man to the full extent of his capacities. This requirement implies that the non-Muslim should become an active participant in the engagement of the Muslim in cosmic work.

The first condition Islam lays for such participation is that it involve no coercion or compulsion. To be itself, it ought to be free. 'No coercion in religion. Virtue and wisdom are manifestly different from vice and misguidance. Whoever rejects Evil and

believes in God has grasped the most trustworthy handhold . . .³⁶ A responsible decision from every non-Muslim in favour of such participation in cosmic engagement and cooperation with the Muslim in the work, is an absolute requirement. Its violation is capital sin, besides being Islamically worthless, and earns for its perpetrator eternal punishment.³⁷ No Muslim, therefore, may spread his faith or bring non-Muslims to join in his enterprise by force.

Knowing the trickery of interhuman relations and the wide possibilities of brainwashing, of influencing decisions, and pressuring human conduct, the Holy Qur'an specified the means of persuasion to be used by the Muslims. 'And call men forth unto the path of our Lord by wisdom and argument yet more sound. Argue the cause with them (the non-Muslim) but with the more comely arguments.'³⁸ If they are not convinced by these methods, Allah commanded the Muslim to leave the non-Muslims alone.³⁹ Certainly, the Muslim is to try again and never give up that Allah may guide the non-Muslim to the truth. If he is to change his tactics at all, it is for the better, the better in wisdom, in truthfulness. The example of his own life, his personal embodiment of the truths and values he professes should constitute his final argument. If the non-Muslim is still not convinced, the Muslim is to strive after better embodiment of Islamic truth and value in his own life and leave the rest to God.

By God's commandment and under His sanctioning authority, the Muslim is to bring about world-order through the free, responsible and comely interchange of ideas. The world is to be turned into a seminar of global scale, and the best idea, the soundest argument, the noblest exemplification are to win the hearts and minds of men. This new world-order is not to be a monolithic unity, even if Islam, as the best idea, did win over the majority. The majority, no matter how large or overwhelming, has no right to coerce even a single deviationist in religion. If that single non-Muslim adamantly refuses to accept the position of the majority, the latter is bound by Islamic law to honour his judgement and to enable him to exercise his convictions, to practise his faith, in freedom and dignity.

Much as the Muslim hopes to win mankind for Islam, he knows that many non-Muslims will continue to resist. As long as this resistance is ideational, the Muslim is bound to respect it. Once the resistance puts obstacles in the way of preaching, that is, once it interferes in the free and responsible interchange of ideas to obstruct, subvert or stop it, then Islam prescribes that the obstacle be removed by force. If religious resistance picks up the sword, then Islam prescribes that it be fought with the same.

Armed resistance, it should be noted, is not merely resistance to religious proposing which should not be countered except by counter-proposing and, if possible, a better argument. Here, armed resistance means forceful opposition to the proposal that religious differences be solved by argument, through persuasion and discussion. It is the sword drawn in answer to a proposal of 'let the best argument win'. Certainly, it deserves to be stopped and broken by the sword. But the action should never have for its purpose the coercion of the resistance into Islam.⁴⁰ Its aim is no more and no less than stopping the violent action taken by the non-Muslims. It should stop immediately upon the cessation of their violence. The recourse to violence is justified only to put an end to the violent obstruction, never to coerce the non-Muslim into conversion to Islam. No power may convert him to Islam except himself.⁴¹

Islam prescribes the most tolerant *modus vivendi* for the Muslims and non-Muslims living under its aegis. Where the Muslims are the dominant majority, or where the state is an Islamic state, the non-Muslims who agree to live with the Muslims in peace constitute an *ummah*, alongside the Muslims. This term '*ummah*' used by the Prophet Muhammad, in the covenant of Madinah with regard to its Jewish minority population, means a society governed by its own law, carrying its own political, economic, educational, judicial, cultural and religious institutions.⁴² Allah, the Prophet, the Islamic state and the whole world-*ummah* of Islam are their guarantors and protectors.⁴³ Their defence against external attack as well as any internal encroachment whether by Muslims, non-Muslims, or by their own members, is a duty imposed by God upon the

Muslims. They are supposed to render the *jizyah*, a poll-tax that is a far lesser economic and financial burden than the *zakāt* imposed upon Muslims, and are to live in virtual independence from the Muslims except in matters of security and prosperity of *Dār al-Islām* as a whole. Most important, however, is the recognition not only that the non-Muslim is not to be coerced or subversively influenced to convert, but that he is fully entitled to pursue his non-Muslimness and pass it on to his descendants. From the view of any religion or -ism whose stand is not one of scepticism, this is indeed the supreme and ultimate demand that the foreigner can make. Islam fulfils it beautifully.

D. The History

The above-mentioned lesson we learn from the essence of Islam is not a fanciful projection of a day-dreamer, of a man wishing for a felicitous inter-religious relationship. It is, rather, the vision of an actual movement in history. It is a vision which has been translated into directives for daily living and action, crystallized permanently into law (the *Shari'ah*), actually observed by millions of people, across fourteen centuries, in areas covering a wide and long belt of the surface of the earth.

In Makkah, before the existence of the Islamic state, indeed before the formation of the Muslims into an organic ummah, Islam declared itself a confirmation of all previous revelations and identified itself with Judaism and Christianity.⁴³ But noticing the baffling array of doctrines, creeds and practices of Jews and Christians, Islam distinguished between these phenomena of history and the original Judaism and Christianity which God gave to His prophets.⁴⁴ By its criticism of the discrepancies and contradictions, it incepted objective study of the history of the two religions, critical study of their scriptures, the Torah and the New Testament. It recognized the divine base of both and ascribed the historical growth to human effort, whether well or ill-meaning. It identified itself with the religion of Abraham, Moses and Jesus and, before them, with the religion of Adam and Noah. It rehabilitated the whole of mankind religiously by

recognizing a *religio naturalis* innate in all men; and related to them all without exception by declaring itself as a claim to no more than the content of that primal, original, *Ur-Religion*, or gift of God to every human being.

When Makkah persecution became unbearable for many of his followers, the Prophet ordered them to seek refuge in Ethiopia, the Christian Kingdom, confident that the followers of Jesus Christ are moral, charitable and friendly, promoters of the worship of God.⁴⁵ His high regard for them was well placed. For their Christian emperor rejected Makkah's demand for extradition of the Muslim refugees and acclaimed the Qur'anic recognition of the prophethood of Jesus, the innocence of his mother and the oneness of God.⁴⁷

Upon arrival in Madinah, where the Prophet founded the first Islamic state, the Jews were recognized as an autonomous ummah within the Islamic state.⁴⁸ Henceforth, Jewish law, religion and institutions became a sacrosanct trust whose protection, safe-keeping and perpetuation became a Muslim responsibility imposed by the religion of Islam itself. Only questions of external war and peace fell outside the jurisdiction of the sovereign Jewish ummah and even on this level, the Islamic state was not to act without *shūrā* consultation with all its constituents, including the non-Muslims. Likewise, the Christian Arabs of Najrān came to Madinah following the Prophet's launching of the new Islamic state to negotiate their own place in the emerging society. The Prophet himself called them to Islam and argued with them at length with all the eloquence at his disposal. Some of them converted; but the majority did not. Muḥammad nonetheless granted them the same autonomous status accorded to the Jews, loaded them with gifts, and sent them home under the protection of a Muslim bodyguard and a Muslim statesman, Mu'ādh ibn Jabal, to organize their affairs, solve their problems and serve their interests.⁴⁹

As the Muslims fanned out of Arabia into Byzantium, Persia, and India, large numbers of Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Hindus and Buddhists came under their dominion. The same recognition granted to the Jews and Christians by the Prophet

personally was granted to every non-Muslim religious community on the one condition of their keeping the peace.¹⁰ The case of Jerusalem was the *typus* of this Muslim tolerance and good-will on the religious level as well as on the social and cultural. The brief but illustrious charter reads:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. This charter is granted by 'Umar, Servant of Allah and Prince of the Believers, to the people of Aelia. He grants them security for their persons and their properties, for their churches and their crosses, the little and the great, and for adherents of the Christian religion. Neither shall their churches be dispossessed nor will they be destroyed, nor their substances or areas, nor their crosses or any of their properties, be reduced in any manner. They shall not be coerced in any matter pertaining to their religion, and they shall not be harmed. Nor will any Jews be permitted to live with them in Aelia.

Upon the people of Aelia falls the obligation to pay the *jizyah*; just as the people of Madā'in (Persia) do, as well as to evict from their midst the Byzantine army and the thieves. Whoever of these leaves Aelia will be granted security of person and property until he reaches his destination. Whoever decides to stay in Aelia will also be granted the same and share with the people of Aelia, in their rights and the *jizyah*. The same applies to the people of Aelia as well as to any other person. Anyone can march with the Byzantines, stay in Aelia or return to his home country, and has until the harvesting of the crops to decide. Allah attests to the contents of this treaty, and so do His Prophet, his successors and the believers.

Signed: 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb

Witnessed by: Khālid ibn al-Walīd, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Awf and Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān.
Executed in the year 15 AH¹¹

Nothing is farther from the truth and more inimical to Muslim-non-Muslim relations than the claim that Islam spread by the sword. Nothing could have been and still is more condemnable to the Muslim than to coerce a non-Muslim into Islam. As noted earlier, the Muslims have been the first to condemn such action as mortal sin. On this point, Thomas Arnold, an English missionary in the Indian Civil Service of colonial days and no friend of Islam wrote:

... of any organised attempt to force the acceptance of Islam on the non-Muslim population, or of any systematic prosecution intended to stamp out the Christian religion, we hear nothing. Had the caliphs chosen to adopt either course of action, they might have swept away Christianity as easily as Ferdinand and Isabella drove Islam out of Spain, or Louis XIV made Protestantism penal in France, or the Jews were kept out of England for 350 years. The Eastern Churches in Asia were entirely cut off from communion with the rest of Christendom throughout which no one would have been found to lift a finger on their behalf, as heretical communions. So that the very survival of these Churches to the present day is a strong proof of the generally tolerant attitude of the Muhammadan governments towards them.¹²

Compared with the histories of other religions, the history of Islam is categorically white as far as toleration of other religions is concerned. Fortunately, we have on record many witnesses from those days of Muslim conquest to whom we should be very grateful for clearing up this matter once and for all. Michael the Elder, Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, wrote in the second half of the twelfth century: 'This is why the God of vengeance ... beholding the wickedness of the Romans who, throughout their dominions, cruelly plundered our churches and our monasteries and condemned us without pity - brought from the region of the south the sons of Ishmael, to deliver us through them from the hands of the Romans.'¹³ Barhebraeus (1226-86) is author of an equally powerful witness in favour of Islam.¹⁴ Ricoldus de

Monte Crucis, a Dominican monk from Florence who visited the Muslim East about 1300 CE, gave an equally eloquent witness of tolerance – nay, friendship – to the Christians.³⁵ And yet, if the Muslims were so tolerant, the Christian persistently asks, why did his co-religionists flock to Islam by the millions? Of these co-religionists, the Arabs were the smallest minority. The rest were Hellenes, Persians, Egyptians, Cyrenaicans, Berbers, Cypriots, and Caucasians. Canon Taylor once explained it beautifully at a Church Congress held at Wolverhampton. He said:

It is easy to understand why this reformed Judaism (*sic!*) spread so swiftly over Africa and Asia. The African and Syrian doctors (*sic*) had substituted abstruse metaphysical dogmas for the religion of Christ: they tried to combat the licentiousness of the age by setting forth the celestial merit of celibacy and the angelic excellence of virginity – seclusion from the world was the road of holiness, dirt was the characteristic of monkish sanctity – the people were practically polytheists, worshipping a crowd of martyrs, saints and angels; the upper classes were effeminate and corrupt, the middle classes oppressed by taxation, the slaves without hope for the present or the future. As with the bosom of God, Islam swept away this mass of corruption and superstition. It was a revolt against empty theological polemics; it was a masculine protest against the exaltation of celibacy as a crown of piety. It brought out the fundamental dogmas of religion – the unity and greatness of God, that He is merciful and righteous, that He claims obedience to His will, resignation and faith. It proclaimed the responsibility of man, a future life, a day of judgement, and stern retribution to fall upon the wicked; and enforced the duties of prayer, almsgiving, fasting and benevolence. It thrust aside the artificial virtues, the religious frauds and follies, the perverted moral sentiments, and the verbal subtleties of theological disputants. It replaced monkishness by manliness. It gave hope to the slave, brotherhood to mankind, and recognition to the fundamental facts of human nature.³⁶

III. The Basis for Inter-Religious Cooperation: Islamic Humanism

This brilliant theory of the other faiths presented by Islam is unmatched and unmatchable. While Vatican II has in a condescending and paternalizing manner decreed twenty centuries after Jesus, that Judaism is religiously acceptable as a *preparatio* for Christianity, and fourteen centuries after Muḥammad, that Islam is a tolerable approximation of Christianity, it asserted that outside the Roman Catholic Church no salvation is possible, thus withdrawing with one hand what it granted with the other. That no one will be saved unless he is a member of the Catholic Church of Rome consigns to eternal damnation not only the Muslims and the Jews but all the Protestant Christians as well. As to Protestantism, we have still heard nothing regarding Islam except rumours and hearsay from individuals. The World Council of Churches has so far not spoken on these issues. Indeed, it even turned down Libya's invitation to join the Islamic-Christian dialogue of Tripoli (1976). Apparently, it participates only in dialogues held under its own auspices. Previously, the WCC did hold its own dialogue sessions with Islam (Bḥamdūn, Brummānā, Hong Kong, etc.) but under its own terms and with Muslim representatives of its own choosing.

Judaism and Hinduism are ethnocentric religions by nature. In modern times, they have become more ethnocentric than ever. Their religious exclusivism is incompatible with dialogue with the other world religions. But their traditions are not devoid of strands favourable to ecumenism and encouraging to dialogue. An ethical monotheistic Judaism, born in the Middle Ages under the aegis of Islamic philosophy, culture, and mysticism has gained strength since the Emancipation, under the influence of the Enlightenment and of Western humanism. But it has been severely weakened in recent times by Zionism, which is the archetype of ethnocentric exclusivism. Likewise, Hindus have recourse to an established tradition of philosophical Hinduism which provides ample room for inter-religious dialogue and

universalist human fellowship. Both these tendencies in Judaism and Hinduism deserve encouragement.

Islam's theory of other faiths, backed by the experience of fourteen centuries, still commands the loyalty and support of a billion Muslims around the world. It provides us with the best foundation for a religious world-ecumene in which the religions honour one another's claims without denying their own. It also provides us with the only legitimate foundation for seeking the religious unity of mankind. If inter-religious dialogue is to move beyond the exchange of information and courtesies, it has to have a religious norm in terms of which it can compose the differences between the religions. This religious norm must be common to the dialoguing parties. Islam finds this norm in *din al-fitrah*. It is also essential that the dialoguing parties feel a measure of freedom *vis-à-vis* their historical religious traditions. No idea is more conducive to such freedom than Islam's suggestion that the religious tradition is a human outgrowth from primal *din al-fitrah*. It was this Islamic idea which inceptioned in history the academic study of religion involving a critical assessment of the historical authenticity of the religious traditions of mankind, of their holy texts, traditions and practices. Scholarship in religion, i.e., critical analysis of texts and history, has begun in the West in the Enlightenment. Islamic scholarship in religion is a whole millennium older, and has an advantage over the most advanced scholarship of today, namely, that its stand is not one of scepticism. The sceptic may ask questions in religion; but he may not answer them.

The Islamic theory is particularly strong as regards Judaism and Christianity which it treats not as 'other religions' but as itself. Its recognition of the God of Judaism and of Christianity as its God, of their prophets as its prophets, and its commitment to the divine invitation to the People of the Book to cooperate and live together under God constitute the first and only real step towards religious unity of two world religions ever made. An Abrahamic unity of Judaism, Christianity and Islam based on the Hanifi religion of Abraham, the *din al-fitrah*, is a real possibility. It did in fact exist in the Muslim world until Western imperialism,

colonialism and Zionism came to subvert it. Their effort, however, has been in vain. The Muslim will continue to believe in and work for this unity, confident that his God Whom he knows to be one as truth is one and the moral law is one, cannot but desire one religion, to be entered into by all men freely and deliberately, because it is itself when it is the result of personal conviction, not of a blind wager *à la Pascal*, but a certainty reached after a critical weighing of all the options, of all the evidence. In following up this ideal, nothing could be more worthwhile to the Muslim to subsidize and to promote whether in the Muslim world, or the non-Muslim world, than the comparative study of religion.

The Islamic stand toward the other faiths thus combines three crucial distinctions: Firstly, it is not only tolerant, but assumes the Holy of the other religions to be Holy, their prophets to be prophets of God and their revelations to come from God. Tolerance implies dualism and a basic difference between the subject and object of tolerance. Islam does away with the basic difference as it eliminates the dualism itself. It identifies itself with Judaism and Christianity and enjoins upon its adherents at least as much, if not more, religious respect and devotion to the Prophets and revelations of Judaism and Christianity. No religion preserved the shrines of another in its own base, and indeed enabled them to prosper in its midst, except Islam. And no tolerance whatever has ever reached the point of enforcing the other religions' laws in its own territory, except in Islam. Nay more, no religion has ever countenanced, or can ever countenance, teaching its own adherents as well as having them enforce the idea that it is part of their religion, and hence their religious obligation, to enforce the observance of the other religions' laws as long as their adherents live in their midst. And only in the Muslim world and under an Islamic government would it be true to say that neither Jew nor Christian is free to de-Judaize or de-Christianize himself in rebellion against or in defiance of his own religious authority.

Secondly, the Islamic stand toward the other faiths, having brought all faiths under a single roof or *din al-fitrah*, satisfies the

only condition for constructive dialogue and inter-relation. Under it, all differences between the religions are domestic family squabbles. Criticism, argument and counter-argument mutually affect all the members on account of this organic relationship in which Islam has bound them to one another. Such criticism across the lines of various religions is brought forth by constituent members concerned about the total system which houses, includes and unites them. Unless the religions become conscious of and emphasize this common bond, they may never be able to meet and surmount their present difficulties. Besides this advantage, the Islamic stand furnishes the religions with the groundwork necessary for an effective purge, a creatively constructive reform of their own traditions. Given *dīn al-ḥaqq* or the first presuppositions of human religiosity, any religious tradition should be able to face the strongest criticism without fear. For its ultimate concerns, namely God, the purposiveness of existence, the real possibility of salvation and the final redressing of the balance of happiness – all these are safeguarded. Scepticism in epistemology and metaphysics or cynicism in ethics, value-theory and religion, cannot be silenced by the religious authoritarianism of an *ex cathedra* pronouncement, or of a dogmatic assertion. Only reason and experience can do so. That is what the Islamic stand offers us. Islamic rationalism has indeed achieved what the Enlightenment and its followers in the West have failed to do; namely, to absorb the criticism of the sceptics – the empiricists and romantics of the nineteenth century – and so press forth creatively and critically for a rational authentication of the religious traditions, a rational validation of their diverse claims. Such scholarship is not an idle wish. It is a genuine hope stemming from a religious conviction which looks upon creation with the eyes of the most fastidious and critical science and exclaims: O Lord, You have not created all this in vain, in sport!¹⁷

Thirdly and finally, the Islamic stand toward the other faiths constitutes a new humanism because it is founded on a new faith in man. Man's nature is being badly abused in the world today. Having lost the battle of establishing man as a lump of sin,

a *massa peccata*, Christianity has practically given up contending in the matter of the nature of man. Scepticism, ethnocentric particularism and materialism divide the field of the theory of man. While materialism defines man as little more than teeth, hands and stomach, nationalist madness declares him a Jew, or a German to the exclusion of all other men. In the meantime, scepticism stands by and mocks at man and his crucifiers. It is no wonder that the serious among Westerners are all sceptics. For scepticism is the most rational of the three stands prevalent in the West.

Islam's *dīn al-ḥaqq* is the only idea capable of pulling Western man out of his predicament and launching him on a dynamic and creative road to self-fulfilment. As it did for the ancient Mesopotamian, *dīn al-ḥaqq* can do for man today: it gives him the world to reknead and remould in the service of God. To serve God is hence to create culture and civilization. But this is none other than to attain the highest possible self-fulfilment.

Notes

1. Controversies have arisen, as they certainly may, in the interpretation of the Qur'ānic text. What is being affirmed here is the fact that the Qur'ānic text is not bedevilled by a hermeneutical problem. Differences of interpretation are apodictically soluble in terms of the very same categories of understanding in force at the time of revelation of the text (611–32 CE), all of which have continued the same because of the freezing of the language and the daily intercourse of countless millions of people with it and with the text of the Holy Qur'ān.

2. Except Wilfred C. Smith (*The Meaning and End of Religion*, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1962) who did so on the basis of a Heraclitean metaphysics of change. His theory has been analyzed by this author in 'The Essence of Religious Experience in Islam', *Numen*, Vol. XX, Fasc. 3, pp. 186–201. [See Chapter One of this book.]

3. *al-Baqarah* 2: 30; *Al-An'am* 6: 165; *Yūnus* 10: 14, 73; *al-Fāṭir* 35: 39; *al-A'raf* 7: 68, 73; *al-Naml* 27: 62.

4. *Deuteronomy* 6: 6–8; 9: 5–6; *Hosea* 1, 2.

5. *Qur'ān*, *al-Baqarah* 2: 285; *al-Zilzāl* 99: 6–8; *al-Qāri'ah* 101: 6–11; *al-'Asr* 103: 1–3.

6. Qur'an, *al-Fāṭir* 35: 24. See also *al-Nahl* 16: 84, 89.

7. Qur'an, *al-Nahl* 16: 36.

8. 'To every people We sent a prophet-guide' (Qur'an, *al-R'ad* 13: 7); 'We sent every prophet that guidance may be conveyed in his people's own tongue . . .' (*Ibrāhīm* 14: 4).

9. 'We would pronounce no judgement until after We had sent a prophet' (Qur'an, *al-Isrā'* 17: 15).

10. 'Those who know and those who do not, are they ever equal?' (Qur'an, *al-Zumar* 39: 9). 'Nor are they equal, the blind and the man of vision, darkness and enlightenment, that which is shaded and that which is in full light' (*al-Fāṭir* 35: 19). 'Read! For your Lord is the more generous. He it is Who taught man use of the pen; Who taught man that of which man had no knowledge' (*al-'Alaq* 96: 3-5).

11. 'Everything We have created, We gave it its pattern' (Qur'an, *al-Qamar* 54: 49); 'He created everything and gave it its measure' (*al-Furqān* 25: 2); 'To every creature God has assigned a pattern' (*al-Talāq* 65: 3).

12. 'The power to determine everything on earth and in heaven is His' (Qur'an, *al-Shūrā* 42: 12); 'God is He Whose will is always fulfilled' (*Hād* 11: 107; *al-Burūj* 85: 16); 'Doer of all that He intends' (*al-Burūj* 85: 16); 'God's will or commandment will always be fulfilled' (*al-Nisā'* 4: 47; *al-Aḥzāb* 33: 37; *al-Aḥzāb* 8: 42).

13. 'All that is on earth and in heaven praises God; He is the Almighty, the Wise' (*al-Ḥadīd* 57: 1); 'To God give praise the seven heavens and the earth, all that is in them and all that exists. You do not perceive their praise' (*al-Isrā'* 17: 44). See also *al-Nūr* 24: 41; *al-Ḥashr* 59: 24; *al-Jum'ah* 62: 1; *al-Taghābūn* 64: 1.

14. 'We have created neither mankind nor the jinn except to serve Me' (Qur'an, *al-Dhāriyat* 51: 56). 'O men, serve Allah. For it is He Who created you' (*al-Baqarah* 2: 21); 'We have sent no prophet but we have revealed to him that there is no God but Me. Therefore, Serve Me' (*al-Anbiyā'* 21: 25). See also *al-An'am* 6: 102; *Yūnus* 10: 3; *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 79; *al-Mu'minūn* 23: 32.

15. 'Praise the name of your Lord on high, Who created everything in the best of forms' (Qur'an, *al-A'lā* 87: 1-2); 'Would you not believe in Him Who created you from dust, then made you flesh, then perfected you into a man?' (*al-Kahf* 18: 37); 'O man, what confuses you about your generous Lord? Who created you, Who endowed you completely. Who made you straight and perfect? He could have created you in different form . . .' (*al-Ḥajj* 82: 6-8).

16. Unlike the Bible, the Qur'an tells us that Adam did indeed commit a misdemeanour by eating of the tree which God forbade. But it also tells us that

Adam repented, and his repentance was accepted (*al-Baqarah* 2: 35-7; *Tā Hā* 20: 115-22). Furthermore, Islam upholds the principle of personal responsibility absolutely, and rejects every shade of vicarious guilt or merit. 'No soul may carry the burden of another; nobody may assume the guilt of another however closely related he may be' (*al-Fāṭir* 35: 18). 'Whoever does a good deed, that will be reckoned only unto him; and whoever does a bad deed, against him' (*al-Jāthiyah* 45: 15).

17. *al-Hijr* 15: 29; *Sād* 38: 72; *al-Anbiyā'* 21: 91; *al-Tahrim* 66: 12.

18. 'Lift up your face toward the religion, like a *ḥanīf*. That is the natural religion with which Allah has endowed all men at their creation. No exception or change befalls Allah's creation' (Qur'an, *al-Rūm* 30: 30).

19. 'As far as religion is concerned, God has instituted for you the same religion which He had instituted for Noah, this and what has been revealed to you Muḥammad being one. It is the same which We have revealed to Ibrāhīm, to Moses, to Jesus. Observe therefore the religion; and do not divide yourselves' (Qur'an, *al-Shūrā* 42: 13). 'Felicitous are those who believe in God and all His prophets without distinguishing between them' (*al-Nisā'* 4: 152). 'How many prophets did We send to those that went before you! . . . We sent no prophet before you (Muḥammad) but We have revealed to him that there is no God but Allah; that service is due Him' (*Zukhruf* 43: 6; *al-Anbiyā'* 21: 25). 'God has revealed this Book to you Muḥammad, in truth, in confirmation of previous revelations; for it is He Who revealed the Torah and the Evangel' (*Āl 'Imrān* 3: 3).

20. 'With Allah, the religion is Islam' (Qur'an, *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 19).

21. 'With Allah, the religion is Islam. Those to whom revelation was sent before you did not disagree with the religion except after some of them claimed their own illusions to be genuine knowledge of religion' (Qur'an, *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 19).

22. 'Allah has sent the prophets to proclaim (the religion) and to warn. He revealed to them the Book in truth to put an end to their disputes in religion, disputes which did not arise until their false claims had intermingled among them' (Qur'an, *al-Baqarah* 2: 213). See also *al-Mā'idah* 5: 14.

23. Those who were given the Book did not disagree among themselves concerning religion except after their introduction to what they thought to be evident information (which was far from being the case). For they were never asked to worship but Allah and to serve Him sincerely in *ḥanīf* spirit (in the spirit of natural religion); that is to observe the prayer, and to pay the *zakāt*. That is the true religion' (Qur'an, *al-Bayyinah* 98: 4-5).

24. A popular tradition reported by all traditionalists.

25. Qur'an, *al-Baqarah* 2: 135; *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 67, 95; *al-Nisā'* 4: 123; *al-An'am* 6: 79, 161; *Yūnus* 10: 105; *al-Nahl* 16: 120, 123; *al-Hajj* 22: 31.

26. "Say, O People of the Book! Come now to agreement with us, based on a fair principle common to both, namely, that we shall all worship none but Allah; that they shall never associate any other with Him; that we shall never take one another as lords beside Allah" (*Qur'an, Āl 'Imrān* 3: 64).

27. "Those who have believed, the Jews, the Christians, the Sabaeans – all those who believe in Allah and in the Day of Judgement, and do the good works, their reward is surely with their Lord. No fear shall befall them; nor shall they grieve" (*Qur'an, al-Baqarah* 2: 62).

28. "Religious goodness does not consist in your ritual worship, turning your faces towards the East or towards the West. Rather, it consists in believing in Allah, in the Day of Judgement, in His Angels, Books and Prophets, as well as in sharing one's wealth, for His sake, with the relative, the orphan, the destitute, the wayfarer; in spending it for the ransom of those who are not free; as well as in observing the prayers, paying the *zakāt*, fulfilling one's contracts and promises, in holding firm in good times and ill times, or under constraint; in being always truthful. Those are the truly felicitous" (*Qur'an, al-Baqarah* 2: 177).

29. See notes 27, 28 above.

30. Wing-tsit Chan, et al., *The Great Asian Religions* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1969), pp. 348–58. For specific social values of Islamic rituals, see *Qur'an, al-'Ankabūt* 29: 45 for prayer, and *al-Hajj* 22: 28 for pilgrimage.

31. "Let there be of you an ummah which calls men to the good, enjoins the good deeds, forbids the evil. Such would be the felicitous" (*Qur'an, Āl 'Imrān* 3: 104).

32. "Those who have done injustice to themselves; when they are asked "Why is your condition so miserable?" they answer: "Our weakness was exploited by our enemies." Then will they be told: "Isn't the earth of Allah large enough? Why then didn't you emigrate and get out from under your yoke?" Such people will have the eternal fire as their abode. Theirs will be a sad fate, except the impotent among men, women and children, who are utterly incapable of means of action" (*Qur'an, al-Nisā'* 4: 97–8).

33. "We have sent to them Our prophets. We sent Jesus, Son of Mary, and revealed to him the Evangel. We endowed the hearts of his followers with compassion and mercy. But montery We did not prescribe to them. They invented it . . ." (*Qur'an, al-Hadīd* 57: 27).

34. *Qur'an, al-Baqarah* 2: 82, 177; *al-Nisā'* 4: 7, 36; *al-Anfāl* 8: 41; *al-Nahl* 16: 90; *al-Isrā'* 17: 26; *al-Nūr* 24: 22; *al-Rūm* 30: 38; *al-Shūrā* 42: 23.

35. *Qur'an, Sabā'* 34: 28; *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 110; *al-Baqarah* 2: 143; *al-Hajj* 22: 78; *al-Nisā'* 4: 135.

36. *Qur'an, al-Baqarah* 2: 256.

37. *Qur'an, Yūnus* 10: 99.

38. *Qur'an, al-Nahl* 16: 125.

39. *Qur'an, Āl 'Imrān* 3: 176–7; *Muhammad* 47: 32.

40. *Qur'an, Muhammad* 47: 4; *al-Anfāl* 8: 62; *Yūnus* 10: 99; *al-Baqarah* 2: 256.

41. *Qur'an, al-Ra'd* 13: 12; *al-Anfāl* 8: 54.

42. The 'Covenant of Madinah' was the constitution of the first Islamic state. It was dictated and enacted by the Prophet in the first week following his emigration from Makkah to Madinah. For the full text, see Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Rasūl Allah*, tr. by Alfred Guillaume under the title *The Life of Muhammad* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 231–4.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Qur'an, al-Baqarah* 2: 97; *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 3; *al-Mā'idah* 5: 48; *al-An'am* 6: 92.

45. *Qur'an, al-Baqarah* 2: 79, 101; *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 23, 64–5, 70–1, 78, 98–9; *al-Nisā'* 4: 50, 78; *al-Mā'idah* 5: 15, 51; *al-A'raf* 7: 169.

46. A. Guillaume, *op. cit.*, pp. 146–54.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 150–1. The event has been confirmed by revelation of *al-Mā'idah* 5: 83–5.

48. A. Guillaume, *op. cit.*, pp. 146 ff.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 270–7. Muhammad Husayn Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, tr. by I.R. al-Faruqi (Indianapolis: The North American Islamic Trust, 1976), pp. 477 ff.

50. Muhammad 'Alī bin Hāmid ibn Abī Bakr al-Kūfī, *Shāh Nāmāh: Tārīkh-i Hind wa Sind*, tr. A.M. Elliott, in *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians* (Allahabad: Kitāb Mahāl Private Ltd., n.d.), Vol. I, pp. 184–7.

51. Quoted in Alistair Duncan, *The Noble Sanctuary* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1972), p. 22. Also Thomas W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith* (Lahore: Sh. M. Ashraf, 1961, first pub. 1896), pp. 56–7.

52. Thomas Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

53. Michael the Elder, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche* (1166-99), ed. J.B. Chabot (Paris, 1899-1901), Vol. II, pp. 412-13. Quoted in Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

54. Gregorii Barhebraei, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, ed. J.B. Abbeloos and T.J. Lamy (Louvain, 1872-77), p. 474.

55. *Et ego inveni per antiquas historias et autenticas apud Saracenos, quod ipsi Nestorini amici fuerunt Mochometi et confederate cum eo, et quod ipsi Machometus mandavit suis posteris, quod Nestorinos maxime conservarent. Quod unique hodie diligenter observant ipsi Saraceni* (Laurent, J.C.M., *Peregrinatores Medii Aevi Quatuor*, Lipsiae, 1864, p. 128).

56. Quoted by Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-2.

57. Qur'ân, *Âl 'Imrân* 3: 191; *al-Mu'minûn* 23: 115.

CHAPTER SIX

History of Religions: Its Nature and Significance for Christian Education and the Muslim-Christian Dialogue

I. The Nature of History of Religions

History of religions is an academic pursuit composed of three disciplines: Reportage, or the collection of data; Construction of meaning-wholes, or the systematization of data; and Judgement, or Evaluation, of meaning-wholes.¹

1. Reportage or the Collection of Data

History of religions has known two influences which sought to reduce its jurisdiction by limiting the data which constitute its subject matter: One was the attempt to re-define the religious

A lecture delivered to the faculty of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, on 30 April, 1964, during the author's residence as guest-researcher at the Institution. Professor Bernard E. Meland, Professor of Constructive Theology, and Professor Charles H. Long, Professor of History of Religions, read critical responses. The response of the former appears at the end of this article. That of the latter, consisting largely of notes, appears in endnotes appended to the article where relevant.

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datum in a restricted and narrow manner; and the other was an isolationist policy observed *vis-à-vis* Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

A. The attempt to limit the jurisdiction of history of religions by giving the religious datum a narrow definition developed theories which have tried to isolate the religious element and to identify it in terms of 'the religious', 'the holy', 'the sacred'. The problem these theories faced was primarily the reductionist's analysis of the religious phenomenon into something else that lends itself more readily to his kind of investigation. On the history of religions, this well-intended movement had the effect of limiting the scope of the investigation. If the religious is a unique, irreducible and identifiable element in human life, the religious discipline should aim at it first and last. The other elements of which human life is supposedly composed may be the objects of other disciplines and they may be studied by the history of religions only as *relata* affecting or affected by the uniquely religious element. Among historians of religions in the West, where the act of faith has been held to consist in the confrontation of the person with God in his most personal moment when everything or almost everything that is non-self has been detached from consciousness, the discovery of 'the religious' as a unique element fell on fertile ears and was taken as a matter of course.² Today, fortunately, the relevance of God (may He be Glorified and Exalted) to every aspect and element of space-time is being rediscovered by Western Christendom, and the repudiation of an isolated unique religious holy or sacred is being prepared for. In its place, the religiousness of everything is being discovered, a religiousness which does not consist in the thing's being a mere relation. For a century the Christian theologian has been talking of the whole act of the person as social and not merely of his personal act, as constitutive of the religious; and more recently, of a Christian 'style of living' in an attempt to sacralize the whole of life. Islam has for centuries been teaching the religiousness of all space-time, of all life.

Not only the personal act of faith, nor the social act, nor the whole of space-time and life as *relata*, but the whole of life and

space-time as such constitute the data of history of religions. History of religions studies every human act because every act is an integral part of the religious complexus. Religion itself, however, is not an act (the act of faith, or encounter with God, or of participation), but a dimension of every act. It is not a thing; but a perspective with which everything is invested. It is the highest and most important dimension; for it alone takes cognizance of the act as personal, as standing within the religious-cultural context in which it has taken place, as well as within the total context of space-time.³ For it, the act includes all the inner determinations of the person as well as all its effects in space-time. And it is this relation of the whole act to the whole space-time that constitutes the religious dimension. Everything then is subject matter for the history of religions. The cultic and dogmatic have too long monopolized without challenge the definition of the religious; and the addition of the scriptural, of the theory of origin and destiny of man and cosmos, of the moral and of the aesthetic, and finally, of 'the sacred' or 'the holy' is certainly not enough. Every human act is religious in that it involves the inner person, the member of society, and the whole cosmos all at once, and all being, whether the so-called 'sacred' or the so-called 'profane', is the 'religious'. It was an impoverishment of the realm of the religious to limit it, as it were, to a unique act of man, to a unique aspect of his life, or to the sacred as opposed to the profane. The first two views are not compatible with our modern field theory of meaning, of value or of causation, where the particular is not a unique element, but a point in space-time at which they converge and from which diverge an infinite number of elements in all directions.⁴ The third denies half and more of the realities of the religious experience of mankind.

This restoration to the religious of its universal scope and relevance widens the horizons of the history of religions. Henceforth, it should include every branch of human knowledge and pursuit. For its purposes, mankind may still be divided into Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and others, but the whole history, culture and civilization of the Christians, the Buddhists, the Hindus, the Muslims, etc. should be its object.

B. The history of religions had its jurisdiction further curtailed in another direction. While, theoretically, it was supposed to be a history of all religions, it turned out to be in reality, a history of 'Asiatic' and 'primitive' religions on the one hand, and of the extinct religions of antiquity on the other. By far the overwhelming majority of the literature of the library of history of religions has been devoted to them. Judaism, Christianity and Islam always managed somehow to escape. This is not to plead that one group of materials is better, richer or more important than another. Primitive and ancient religions may very well hold for us many great lessons.⁴ But they are far more impenetrable than the other group because of obstacles of language, of remoteness of time, of wide difference between their categories and ours. The truth that cannot be denied here is that the comparativist has so far found the remoteness of primitive and ancient religions far more reassuring than the explosive character of the living world religions. Hence, he has been far bolder to collect the data of the former, to systematize, generalize about and judge them than the latter. He seems to have shied away, whether in awe or in panic, from handling the data of the living religions.

i. *The Case of Islam*

Islam had for a long time been engaged with the West in a hot colonialist war. The Islamic states bore the brunt of most European expansion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Islam was too 'hot' to handle with a cool presence of mind and was allowed to become a subject for the missionaries to study in reconnoitring the infidels' field. With the development of the discipline, Islamics, a fair portion of this reconnaissance work passed on to secular hands. But these were more interested in helping the colonial office at home than in the discovery and establishment of truth. With the decline of the age of colonialism, an autonomous Islamics discipline came to life and, using the pioneering works of the previous generations of Islamists and the popularized mastery of the Islamic languages, Western

knowledge of Islam developed very rapidly. All these considerations discouraged the serious student of comparative religion from studying Islam. While in the earlier stages the Western comparativist was a missionary, and as such disqualified from the study of the Islamic religio-culture, in the later stage (namely the stage of the secular Islamics discipline), he has been totally eclipsed by Goldziher (1850-1921), Schacht (1877-1970), Gibb (1895-1971), Arberry (1905-69) and men of like stature. So little is the Western historian of religions nowadays equipped in Islamics that that discipline, to which he has hardly contributed anything, does not seem to need him. Even today, no historian of religions proper has had anything to say that would catch the attention of the men of knowledge in the Islamics field. At the root of this shortcoming stands the fact that Islam was never regarded as an integral part of the subject matter of history of religions.

ii. *The Case of Judaism*

While the persistent witness of Judaism against Christ aroused fierce hatred and anti-Semitism, its close parental relation to Christianity accounted not only for the warmest admiration, but for Christianity's self-identification with the Hebrews of antiquity. As a result, the Christian mind was always confused regarding the phenomenon of Judaism as a whole. It sought clarity by dividing that phenomenon into two halves, 'Before Christ' and 'After Christ'. Intellectually, and hence doctrinally, the latter half was a constant source of embarrassment and the ready solution that presented itself was to obliterate it, if not from the world, then from one's own mind. The former half became the object of Old Testament criticism; but this was never regarded as a branch of the comparative study of religion; that is to say, it was never treated independently of the categories of Christianity. Even where, as in Sigmund Mowinckel's *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (tr. R.A.P. Thomas, Oxford, Blackwell, 1962), the whole purport of the study is, rather than '*Gattungsgeschichte*', the discovery of the *Sitz-im-Leben* in which the psalms - 'the *fons et*

origo of Christian hymnody⁶ – developed and crystallized as the only way to the understanding of what they could have meant to the Hebrew standing in the *sodh* of the temple, listening to or reciting them, the study is shot through with Christian meanings and categories which were obviously introduced in order to show the ripeness of Hebrew consciousness to receive the Incarnation, its certain though hazy anticipation of the Christian dispensation, of 'He that Cometh' which is the title of another work by that author.⁷ Except where it was pursued as a Semitic discipline, Old Testament study was never an autonomous science, but has remained to this day the handmaid of Christian theology. Where Old Testament studies developed as Semitic disciplines, they did achieve such autonomy; but they equally removed themselves from theology, history of religions and indeed the 'Divinity Halls' of the universities in every case. Where the study remained within the 'Divinity Halls', its highest objective, its *raison d'être*, never went beyond the confirmation of Christian dogma. The Christianist⁸ strategy of thought could ill-afford to put the Old Testament under the light of the comparative discipline. Hebrew scripture is, in this view, equally Christian scripture; Hebrew history, Christian history; and Hebrew theology, Christian theology. Hence, Old Testament criticism was confined to showing how Hebrew scripture is a scripture which as the saying goes, was written 'from faith to faith' – that is to say, written by people who believed in the divine scheme as Christianism understands it, for people who equally believe therein. Actually, another book, i.e., a whole complexus of Christianist ideas, was pasted onto Hebrew scripture and Old Testament criticism was assigned the duty of keeping the paste moist and sticky. To this author's knowledge, no Christian theologian yet has dared to call Old Testament criticism by the only name it really deserves, namely, a part of the history of religions; and no historian of religions has yet attempted to rehabilitate the data of Old Testament criticism as integral to a reconstructed history of Hebrew and Jewish religion, rather than a *Heilsgeschichte*, or a history of the Father's manipulation of history as a prelude to the Incarnation.

iii. *The Case of Christianity*

Lastly, Christianity managed to escape from the history of religions because the greatest number of historians or comparativists held it above all the religions; indeed, as the standard-bearer and judge of them. The limitation of the religious to the unique and personal act of faith confirmed this standard-bearing character of Christianity as the only one which fully realizes the meaning advocated.

History of religions is certainly fortunate in having at its disposal a very great amount of information collected over a whole century with great patience and labour. The great explorers and compilers of primitive religions have left an impressive legacy. The Orientalists, Islamicists and students of Asiatic religions, the Old Testament critics, the Semiticists who developed out of Old Testament criticism autonomous Semitic and Ancient Near East disciplines, and the historians of the Christian Church, of Christian doctrine and of Christian civilization – all have contributed to present to history of religions its future subject matter. Undoubtedly, this subject matter is the greatest mass of human knowledge ever assembled. It would seem as if the work of history of religions we called reportage is all done and complete; but the truth is that a great deal more is required. Surely, sufficient knowledge has been accumulated to enable the history of religions to make a start in the second stage of systematization. But the future systematization of this knowledge needs a continuous activity of data-collection, the more fastidious and scrupulous the more exacting the work of systematization becomes. One systematization cannot refute and replace another unless it can marshal new data for its support or reveal new relations of old data which the first systematization had omitted. Invariably, this requires a mastery of the language or languages involved and a complete familiarity with the whole range of materials. The job which we called collection of data is really interminable.

2. Construction of Meaning-Wholes or the Systematization of Data

This great mass of data must be systematized; i.e., ordered in three different operations:

A. Firstly, it should be classified in a way which answers the organizational needs of a modern enquiry. Under each heading the relevant data should be so analyzed and related to one another as to reveal the nexus of ideas of which they are the embodiment. The organization of the material must enable the modern researcher to put under the lucid light of consciousness, quickly and certainly, the whole field of ideas and all the particular items therein which, in any religion or aspect of a religion, constitute a single network or system of meanings. It should be topical as well as historical, and should endeavour to lay, at the disposal of the understanding, a comprehensive picture of all the facts pertinent to all topics, periods or groups within the religio-culture under examination. In turn, these complexi of data should be analyzed and related among themselves so as to disclose the essence of the religio-culture as a whole.

B. Secondly, the relations of each datum with the whole complexus of history to which it belongs should be shown and established for thought. Its origin must be discovered, and its growth and development, its crystallization, and where necessary, its decay, misunderstanding and final repudiation must be accurately traced. Developments of ideas, institutions, of evaluations and discoveries, of human attitudes and deeds have to be projected against the background of historical facts. For they did not develop in the abstract but in a given milieu, and a need for precisely that development must have been felt. The datum in question must have been meant either to serve or to combat that development. Equally, every one of these developments must have had a whole range of effects which must be brought within the field of vision to be systematized if the understanding of the given data, the given movement, or the given system of ideas is to be complete.⁹

C. Thirdly, the religious data thus classified and systematized ought to be distilled for their meanings, and these meanings should be elucidated and systematized in turn. That is to say, they should be related as meanings, and not as facts as in the first two steps of systematization, to the historical complexus so that the civilization as such becomes both a structured whole of meanings and a whole with a meaning. Every religious datum, whether it is an expression of an idea, an attitude or feeling-state, a personal or social act, whether its object is the subject, society or the cosmos, whether it is a conceptual, discursive statement of the religious idea or act, or it is the religious idea or act itself, refers to something which is the content expressed, the meaning intuited or felt, the purpose realized or violated, or the object of inaction if no action whatever has taken place other than inaction. This something is a value. It is the meaning to which the religious datum is the human response, noetic, attitudinal or actional. As the human response could not become intelligible without its relation to the complexi of history, it cannot be meaningful without its relation to value. The former is a planar relation; the latter is a relation in depth. Unless the plane of historical relations is seen against the background of and is related to values in a depth relation, the religious datum may never be grasped for what it really is.¹⁰

In the discernment, analysis, and establishment of this depth relation — the relation of 'categorical existent' to 'axiological being' or value — history of religions meets serious perils and grave pitfalls. And it is true that a great number of comparative accounts of religions have failed in this requirement of constructing meaning-wholes out of the given religious data. But this failure is the failure of the investigator's own effort. It is not an argument against the history of religions or its methodology, but against the investigator and his research. Against the pitfalls of *exegesis*, of reading into a religious datum something that is not there, or perceiving therein no value, or a value other than that which the adherent himself perceives, there is, in most cases, the religious wisdom of the adherents themselves. If a reconstruction meets the requisites of scholarship while at the same time the adherents

of the religion in question find it meaningful and accept it as saying something to them about their own faith, surely, it has passed all that can be reasonably required of the comparativist. This was essentially the insight of W.C. Smith.¹¹ Certainly, the application of the principle presents a number of serious practical difficulties: The consent of which adherents of the faith may be taken as proof, and how may such consent be expressed? Moreover, it must be at least theoretically possible that the adherents of a religion may have gone so far in interpreting their religion that they have missed its primeval essence, that they do not find it any longer meaningful. This is of course tantamount to their acquiring a new religion, despite the fact that the new may still be called by the name of the old; and Smith's criterion cannot therefore be taken as a test of validity in the strict sense. Nonetheless, if we take it as a pedagogic principle, and ask the historian of religions to check his work, as it progresses, against the perspective of the adherents of the religion under investigation, we would have a check and balance technique to safeguard the work against aberration.

A stricter criterion of validity than an enlightened and scholarly application of Smith's pedagogic principle cannot be reasonably demanded. The adherent's naïve argument, 'Either you study *my* religion and therefore take into consideration what *I* think, *I* cognize, *I* intuit and *I* feel, or you study somebody else's,' cannot be refuted. And as long as the reportage is a reportage on *him*, and the construction of meaning-whole is a systematization of meanings which *he* apprehends and relates in *his* own peculiar way, there is no escape from the recognition that the adherent's considered and scholarly judgement is final. If the historian of religion persists in his dissatisfaction, the only alternative open to him is to start a new investigation, a new reportage and a new systematization which he should distinguish from the first enquiry as he would two different religio-cultures.

The principle governing the work of systematization is therefore that the categories under which the systematizing works should proceed must be innate to the pertinent religio-culture investigated, not imposed thereon from the outside. The

divisions constituting the various religio-cultures must not be interchanged, the data of each must be classified, analyzed and systematized not under categories alien to that religio-culture, but under categories derived from it. Those Christian investigations of non-Christian religions which systematize their materials under such categories as man's predicament; under ritual, law or sacrifice as atonement or salvation, etc., and speak of purity as morality, of the contrast of destiny to history, of redemption as the end and purpose of religion, betray an obvious governance by Christian principles which vitiates them. The suspicion that the investigation in question was carried out in order to show the deficiency of the non-Christian religion in the same areas where Christianity is claimed to be superior, can never be removed.¹² It is particularly here that history of religions shows its purely scientific character. Within the one religion, the task of organizing the data into a systematic whole, of relating doctrinal, cultic, institutional, moral and artistic facts to the history of the civilization concerned as a whole, is a purely scientific affair, despite the fact that the materials with which the historian of religions works are unlike those of the natural or social scientist. The scientific character of an enquiry is not a function of the materials, but of what is done with them.¹³ The materials may be chemical facts or religious meanings. As enquiry into either is scientific if it starts from what is historically given and seeks to uncover the relations that govern the existence and actuality of these facts. It is immaterial that in one case the facts are laboratory materials in test tubes and in the other, ideas and facts recorded in books in a library or lived by a living community of men.¹⁴ Certainly the 'whats' in the two cases are different; but the presuppositions of methodology are the same. Just as the economist, the sociologist, the psychologist, the anthropologist apply the term 'social science' to their scientific treatment of data other than those which can go into a test tube, we shall invent the term 'humanistic science' to describe the history of religions' scientific treatment of materials other than those of the natural and social sciences. It is granted that religious as well as moral and aesthetic meanings are always instantiated

in some overt social or personal behaviour and that, except through abstraction, they are really inseparable from their instances.

3. *Judgement or Evaluation of Meaning-wholes*

A. *The Necessity of Judgement*

However scientific and reliable these two operations may be, a history of religions which has accumulated as many scientific and reliable articulations and systematizations as there are religions is a mere boodle bag in which religio-cultural wholes have just been put one beside the other in eternal and cold juxtaposition. The first two steps of history of religions, therefore, justify the specialized disciplines of Islamic, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist studies, and so forth; but not the history of religions as an autonomous discipline. For this, a third branch of study is necessary, namely, judgement or evaluation. Out of the meaning-wholes constructed by the first two branches of history of religions, one meaning-whole should be arrived at, which would belong to man as such. Like the second, the third operation is also a systematization, not so much of particular data as of meaning-wholes. Its task is that of relating the given meaning-wholes to the universal, the human, and the divine as such. For this, meta-religion, or principles belonging to such order of generality as would serve as bases of comparison and evaluation of the meaning-wholes, is necessary. Such relating does involve a judgement of the individual meaning-wholes, an evaluation of their large claims. That this is itself a very large claim is not denied. Indeed, it sounds quite presumptuous to want to judge the religio-cultures of mankind. But the point is that the significance of the whole discipline of history of religions will stand or fall with the establishment or repudiation of this third branch.

i. We have seen that the first two branches can succeed in putting in front of us a series of internally coherent wholes of meanings, the constituents of each of which are related to one another as well as to their respective categorical existents manifest

in the history, life and culture of that religion as well as to their respective axiological grounds. If the first two operations have been successful, and the religion in question is neither the *Advaita* School of Sankara or the *Deuta* School of Ramanuja Hinduism where all opinions, perspectives and judgements have absolutely the same truth-value, every meaning-whole will contain within it the claim not only that it is true, but that it is *the* truth. This claim is in a sense essential to religion. For the religious assertion is not merely one among a multitude of propositions, but necessarily unique and exclusive. It is of its nature to be imperative in addition to being propositive, and no command can issue therefrom if it did not mean to assert that its content is better or truer than the alternative content of another assertion if not the only true and good content *überhaupt*. Imperativeness is always a preference of something to something else; and this always implies that what is commanded in any instance is the best thing commandable in that instance. Where alternative commandments are of identical value, none may be said to be, by itself, commandable. Religious exclusiveness, when it is asserted not on the level of accidentals but on that of the essentials of a religion, can be dispensed with only at the cost of axiological relativism. For me to understand Christianity, for example, according to its own standards, and Christian thought as an autonomous expression of Christian experience is all well and good. But, if I ever omit from this understanding the claim that Christianity is a valid religion for all men, that the Christian faith is not only a true expression of what God may have done for some people but of what He has done or ever will do for the redemption of all men, of man as such, I am certain I would miss the essence and core. The same is of course true of all religions unless the religion is itself a sacralization of relativism, in which case it may not contend our assertion of exclusiveness without contradicting itself. What we then have in the boodle bag of the historian of religions is not a series of meaning-wholes, *simpliciter*, but a juxtaposition of several meaning-wholes each of which claims to be the only autonomous expression of the truth. These wholes do not only

vary in detail, nor do they merely vary in the important issues. They diametrically contradict one another in most of the principles which constitute the framework and structure of their house of ideas. How then can the historian of religions, who is above all an academician, stop after the presentation of these wholes? As academician, the historian of religions is above all concerned with the truth. But to present the meaning-wholes of the religions and acquiesce to their pluralism is nothing short of cynicism. There is no alternative to this cynicism except in judging and evaluating the claimant meaning-wholes. The historian of religions must therefore do much more than steps 1 and 2.¹⁵

ii. 'Knowledge' in history of religions does not consist merely of the apprehension of data. In science, a datum is gnoseologically valuable by itself, inasmuch as the natural fact held in consciousness is itself the end of the scientific investigation. In history of religions a datum has little history-of-religions-significance unless it is related to the feeling, propensity, aspiration or value-apprehension of which it is the expression, the affirmation or negation, the satisfaction or denial, the approbation or condemnation, the exaltation or denigration and so forth. But feelings, propensities, aspirations are human, not only Christian or Muslim, and value-apprehension is apprehension of a real value in experience. It is not therefore enough to know that for a certain religion, such and such are held to be facts. Movement from the Christianness or Muslimness of a factum to its humanness or universal reality is indispensable. Likewise, no meaning-whole is complete unless its insights, claims, *desiderata* and *damnata* are related to their human and therefore real roots, and thence to the real values and disvalues they seek to make real or to eliminate. Knowledge itself demands this relating to man as such, to existential and axiological reality. But to relate the data and meaning-wholes in this manner is certainly to judge them. Mutually-contradictory as they are, to relate the data of religions or their meaning-wholes to the same reality, whether human or valuational, is really to present an incomplete picture with which the human

understanding can do nothing. Indeed, such relating of them cannot be maintained in consciousness without coercion. But data which cannot be treated except coercively, i.e., cannot be related to the universal and the real without dislodging or being dislodged by other data, cannot be true. Either the dislodging or the dislodged data are wrong, or their place in the meaning-whole has been wrongly assigned. The consequence, therefore, is that either the construction of the meaning-whole has been faulty or the meaning-whole as a whole has laid a false claim to the truth.

B. *The Desirability of Judgement*

Since the data which the historian of religions collects are universally related to meanings or values, they are, in contradistinction from the dead facts of natural science, life-facts. In order to perceive them as life-facts, an *epoché* is necessary in which, as the phenomenologists have argued, the investigator would put his own presuppositions, religion and perspective in brackets while he beholds the given religious datum. This is necessary but insufficient. That the life-fact is endowed with energizing and stirring power implies for epistemology that to apprehend it is to apprehend its moving power in experience. Hence, life-fact cognition is life-fact determination, and to perceive a religious meaning is to suffer determination by that meaning. The historian of religions must therefore be capable of moving freely from one context to another while enabling his ethos to be determined by the data beheld alone. Only thus can he construct the historically given data into self-coherent meaning-wholes, which is his objective as historian of religions. But what does this peregrination mean for him as a human being, as a searcher for wisdom? And consequently, what does it mean for him to present to his fellow-men these mutually-repulsive, severally appealing and determining meaning-wholes?

It may be argued that the historian of religions should do no more than present these meaning-wholes from the highest level of detachment possible. Ivory-tower detachment is not only

impressive but necessary when the subject matter investigated and presented to man belongs to the realm of nature which we call 'dead facts'. To apply it in the realm of life-facts, where to cognize is to be determined in discursive thought as well as in feeling and action is to expose men to their energizing power and moving appeal. Now, if the historian of religions takes no more than steps 1 and 2, he is exposing man to galaxies of meaning-wholes which pull him apart in different directions. There can be no doubt that every human being must reach his own personal decision regarding what is finally-meaningful, that the historian of religions is an academician who must remain absolutely aloof from all attempts to influence man's decision-making. But has he, by presenting to man merely the meaning-wholes in cold juxtaposition, i.e., without relating them to the necessarily-universal, the necessarily-real, the human, presented him with the whole truth? In this age of ours, when the world community has become conscious of a universal, human identity and is repeatedly calling for a discipline that will think out its spiritual problems as a human world community, has the ivory-tower historian of religions, whose training has equipped him best for the job, the right to shy away? Does his shying away cast no doubt on his whole enterprise? By willing to preserve the religions of man frozen as they are, this ivory-tower scholarship detaches itself from the world of man and life that is constantly being made and remade and degenerates into superficiality.

These three considerations – the first two being theoretical, affecting knowledge of religions, and the third practical, questioning the wisdom of avoiding judgement – lead us to think that judgement is both necessary and desirable. There is hence no escape for history of religions from developing a system of principles of meta-religion under which the judgement and evaluation of meaning-wholes may take place. Although there have been many Christian theologies of history of religions, there is, as yet, unfortunately, no critical meta-religion. This shortcoming points further to the unpreparedness of modern Christendom to meet the world-community which is rapidly coming into being.

It is not the purview of this paper to elaborate a system of meta-religion. But it would indeed be incomplete if, having striven to establish its necessity and desirability, we omit to discuss its possibility.

C. *The Possibility of Judgement*

Perhaps the most common genre of meta-religion is that which looks upon the differences among religions as belonging to the surface, and upon their common agreements as belonging to the essence. This view does not always have to assume the superficial form it usually takes in inter-religious conventions where the 'lowest common denominator' agreements are emphasized at the cost of all the difference. It can be sophisticated, as when it claims that underlying all differences, there is a real substratum common to all which is easily discoverable upon closer analysis. But it is nonetheless false because it seeks that substratum on the level of the figurizations and conceptualizations of the different religions where no such unity can be found except through selection of the materials investigated or a coercive interpretation of them. The profound differences that separate the religions on the level of teachings here all disappear in order to clear the road for generalization. When hindrances are found to be obstinate, they are subjected to an interpretation capable of bearing the required meaning. Such is the case of the analysis of Friedrich Heiler (1892-1967), who goes to great lengths to prove that all religions teach the same God and the same ethic, and whose conclusions are not even true to the theory of empirical generalization, not to speak of meta-religion whose principles must be apodictically certain. For him, Jahweh, Ahura Mazdah, Allah, Buddha, Kali, and – presumably, though his enumeration carefully omits him! – Jesus, all are 'imagery' in which the one and same 'reality' is constantly personified.¹⁶ Moreover, 'this reality of the Divine' is identified as 'ultimate love which reveals itself to men and in men';¹⁷ and 'the way of man to God is universally the way of sacrifice'.¹⁸ Obviously this is to see the non-Christian religions with

hopelessly Christian eyes, to bend the historically-given so as to accord with a predetermined Christian order.

Despite the fact that this sort of 'scholarship' may serve to instil among the rank and file a little sympathy for 'the others' who, hitherto, have been regarded as 'infidels', 'natives', etc., it remains at bottom a gratuitous condescension. As methodology of the history of religions, it is utterly worthless.¹⁹

A far more profound and philosophical theory of history of religions has been briefly laid out in an article by Professor B.E. Meland.²⁰ It too regards the religions as fundamentally one, not on the level of doctrine or figurization, but on that of a deeper lying substratum – which is true – and seeks to reach, reconcile or judge the pronouncements of the different religions on the figurization level by reference to that deeper reality which is common to all. It is in the latter aspect that the theory runs aground. Whereas the unphilosophical theories fail because they do not seek humanity on the deeper level where it really is but on the figurizational level where it certainly is not, the philosophical theory of Professor Meland runs short because it seeks that reality on the level which properly belongs to it but identifies it in such a way as to make any knowledge – and hence any methodological use – of it impossible. Let us see how this is so.

Professor Meland analyzes the nature of man as consisting of three elements: First, 'the primordial ground of the individual person as actualized event', i.e., the primordial substratum of reality in which he has his being, his createdness. This deep-lying substrate is ontological and hence it transcends all particularisms; but 'in its actuality . . . it is concrete'. It is 'man's life in God'. It is 'universal'; hence, 'all concretion is ultimately due' to it. All perspectives, judgements, formulations of or within a religion 'partake of this concreteness' and are, hence, 'relative to it' in the 'decisive' sense 'that in this time and place reality has spoken'. It 'defines the base of our humanity' and gives man the capacity to understand the humanity of another.²¹ Second, 'the individuated selfhood of each person', and third, 'the cultural history in which the drama of corporate existence is enacted'.²²

In contrast to the first element which is universal, the second and third are specific and particular, and belong to the level of history and culture. It is true that neither the universal nor the particular is found without the other; but whereas the particular is readily and directly available for knowledge, the universal is never reached except through the particular. Thus the particular, which is a concretization of the universal, is relative thereto in the ontic sense; for it owes to the universal its very being. This may be granted. As to the availability of the universal for knowledge, Professor Meland rules out all hope for the historian of religions ever to attain it outside his own culture and concretization²³ on the grounds that 'the structure of faith [i.e., the particular] is so deeply organic to the individuation of the person in any culture . . . [or so] much of this is below the level of conscious awareness . . .²⁴ [that man's] processes of thought cannot escape or transcend its conditioning, however disciplined they may be'.²⁵

This reduction of all human knowledge to relativity, to the particular cultural structure of the subject (which Professor Meland calls the 'fiduciary framework', borrowing the expression of Michael Polanyi (1891-1976)), stems from a mistaking of relationality for relativity. The aforementioned ontic relation between primordial reality and its concrete actualization in space-time, which is the one-directional dependence of the particular to the universal, is here interpreted as epistemological and is turned around so as to become the absolute dependence of the universal to the particular. For this twist, however, no reason is given, and its net purport is the resolution to recognize only the particular as given, thus closing the gate of any reliable knowledge of the universal. But knowledge of the universal, of primordial reality, must be possible if the particular culture or religion, the 'fiduciary framework', is not to be final. Passage from the particular to the universal, that is to say, the search for a meta-religion with which the particular may be properly understood as well as evaluated, is possible because, to parody the words of Kant (1724-1804), although all history of religions begins with the historically given data of the religions, the concrete religious

experience of men in history, the given of the particular religions, it is not necessary that it all arise therefrom. Professor Meland too is keen to save this possibility, though he is opposed to any facile dogmatique of the universal. With this in mind, he suggested the method of negotiation of meaning in personal inter-religious encounter, asserting that the impenetrable opaqueness of meaning which the alien religion presents to the investigator could be dissipated by the encounter between him and the adherent of that religion, provided both are aware of their fiduciary frameworks, as well as of the fact that they are, as living concretizations of primordial reality, anchored in that one and the same reality. In such an encounter, Professor Meland holds, it would not be their particularistic dogmatique that carries the religious meaning sought, but the persons' saying such words as they do.²⁶

One may ask, however, what does the adherent affirming and denying what he does affirm and deny, mean besides what is affirmed and denied which belongs to the level of the fiduciary framework? That the statement, 'Pete Smith, the American Christian, affirms that all men are sinful', means more than the affirmation 'all men are sinful' is obvious. But what is not obvious is the meaning or relevance of the addition. Again, that the addition has a new meaning and relevance for the sociologist, the social psychologist, the demographer, the historians of all varieties (politics, economics, Christianity, civilization, etc.) studying American society, is obvious. But in all these cases, there is no implication that the fiduciary framework is going to be transcended, not to say that the primordial reality, or the universal, is going to be reached. For an encounter to serve the purpose Professor Meland has assigned to it, the new addition should have a meaning and a relevance to history of religions, that is to say, to the interest transcending the particular religions of the adherents, under which the latter could be illuminated, understood, evaluated and judged. But what is that meaning and relevance which must be other than what the psychologist, economist, historian and other social scientists are interested in? Professor Meland gave us no indication of it. How then can the

desired 'negotiation of meaning' be possible? How may that of which the religious figurization or fiduciary framework is the figurization be critically established for knowledge? Indeed, Professor Meland had already laid down that primordial reality is utterly unknowable. In this case, what reliance could be placed on any person's claim that in affirming and denying what he does, he is expressing 'primordial reality'? How can the encounter differentiate between the person communicating a particularized 'primordial reality' and one communicating a particularized hallucination? Does any fiduciary framework express, take account of and constitute a concretization of 'primordial reality' as well as any other? Are men absolutely free to develop any fiduciary framework they wish? Has not all human wisdom attained anything final at all concerning that primordial reality besides its *Dasein*? If these questions yield only negative results, then negotiated meaning is impossible and encounter is futile. If, on the other hand, the yield is positive, then certainly meta-religion is possible, and the historian of religions should apply himself to the task of elaborating it. In doing so, the historian of religions may not take the stand of scepticism. For to assert God and not to allow Him to be differentiated from a hallucination is idle, as it is for a Muslim to assert the unity of God and not that of truth, or for any rational being to assert reality and then to declare it many or utterly unknowable. To assert with Professors Polanyi and Meland that all we can ever have is a Muslimized or Christianized, Germanized or Russified version of the truth is scepticism – the denial of truth itself, including that of the sceptic's thesis, *à la* Epimenides.

The rock-bottom axiom of this relativism in religious knowledge is the principle that 'the roots of man are in the region; or, more precisely, in that matrix of concrete experience, however much he may succeed in venturing beyond these psychic barriers through various efforts at shared experience'.²⁷ Firstly, this is not self-evident. The contrary, namely, that the root of man is in the human universal rationality in which he partakes by nature, is quite conceivable. Nor can it be made to accord,

secondly, with the wisdom of Biblical 'J' which expressed men's universal brotherhood in their common descentance from Adam, and attributed their cultural peculiarities to environment.²⁸ Thirdly, it stems from an unfortunate fixation in the Western mind that whatever is, is first of all either French or German or English or Christian or Jewish, and is human, universal, real only in second place. This fixation is so chronic that the Western mind not only cannot see reality except as geographically, nationally, culturally or sectarianly determined, but goes on to assume that God created it so. 'Each [concrete occasion of reality] in its own circumstances, bodies forth its distinctive disclosure as an event of actuality, prehending the creative act of God with its own degree of relevance'.²⁹ Evidently, that is the end of the road. It is relativism claiming for itself divine sanction.

And yet, if we can purge Professor Meland's theory of this relativist trait, we have left a genuine insight into the problem and a breakthrough to its solution. Certainly, what unites men of different fiduciary frameworks is, as Professor Meland says, their standing as actualizations of primordial reality, their createdness by one and the same Creator. Religiously speaking, the Creator has not only built in man His own image, i.e., a capacity to transcend his creatureliness and recognize the Creator who is his source, but has taken several measures to bring to man a knowledge of Himself. Man therefore knows God, the primordial reality, if not naturally, then by means of revelation. On the other hand, i.e., metaphysically speaking, the level of being at which man stands is differentiated from the lower levels of things, plants and animals, not only by that instrument of the will to live called the understanding, but by spirit, which enables man to cognize and evaluate his standing in Being's multi-levelled structure. This is none other than Being's attainment of consciousness itself. In man, Being judges itself. That it *has* often misjudged itself is the proof that it *can* judge itself, and consequently that it must, can and in fact does know itself. For it is as inconceivable that Being would enable the emergence of a creature that is a judge of Being without endowing it with the

faculty to know the object of judgement, which is itself, as it is to find a being on any level that is not accompanied by the development of such cognitive faculties as enable the higher concretization of Being to fulfil that which distinguishes it from the lower and hence constitutes its *raison d'être*. That is what I gather from Professor Meland's profound insight; and it is a precious harvest indeed.

II. The Significance of History of Religions for Christian Education

Pursued in its three branches, history of religions is the sovereign queen of the humanities. For, in a sense, all the humanities' disciplines including the comparative ones are her front-line soldiers whose duties are the collection of data, their analysis, systematization and reconstruction into meaning-wholes. The subject matter of these disciplines is men's ideas and actions in all fields of human endeavour; and all these are, as we have seen, constituents in the religio-cultural wholes which history of religions proper studies as wholes, compares and relates to man and divinity in her attempt to reach the truth of both. The queen's concern is for every battlefield and hence for every individual soldier. But her real care is the headquarters kind of work which tells how and where the ship of humanity is going. History of religions, then, is not a course of study; it is not a department in a divinity school. It is, rather, by itself a college of liberal arts, each department of which is organically related to the centre whose job is to make sense out of the infinite diversity of the religio-cultural experience, and then contribute to the reconstruction of man's knowledge of himself, to his rehabilitation in an apparently alien cosmos, to his realization of value. Inasmuch therefore as history of religions is a collection and systematization of facts about human acts, life and relations, it is a college. Inasmuch as history of religions is an evaluation or judgement of meaning-wholes with the aid of a body of critical meta-religious principles, it is the queen of the humanities.

The fact is, however, that on any university or college campus

these disciplines operate on their own in an autonomous manner without recognizing their organic relation to history of religions. This is not undesirable. Firstly, a measure of evaluation and judgement relative to the data under immediate examination is necessary for collection and systematization work which is their duty, as we have seen earlier. Secondly, and in a deeper sense, their attempts at evaluation are desirable inasmuch as intellectual curiosity, or the will to know, is dependent upon the recognition of the unity of truth; i.e., upon the realization that the discovery of truth is a discovery of a reality which is not divisible into unrelated segments but constitutes a unique and integral whole. Such realization is always a requisite for venturing into the unknown fields of reality. Thirdly, their evaluations and judgements are of inestimable value to the historian of religions, even though they may be biased or erroneous. They serve as a check and balance to the historian of religions whenever he is inclined to set the facts aside in favour of abstract constructionism. Such evaluation and judgement as the specialist data-reporter and systematizer are likely to make will at least be truer to the facts in question; and this is a need which history of religions can never overemphasize and no historian of religions can oversatisfy. Fourthly, history of religions herself should keep aware of these developments and be ready to evaluate the discoveries attained by these disciplines. Indeed, the task of evaluation is a necessary one and will be made by the discipline in question or by another at any rate. And the real issue is that of the need for and desirability of evaluation on the level of history of religions, that is to say, on the highest, the most comprehensive and critical level of all.

This is the place of history of religions in the university. What is its place in a school of divinity?

We have said earlier that the final purpose of history of religions is the putting under the light of consciousness the progress or movement of the ship of humanity towards truth, goodness and beauty. For this purpose, it works on its materials as it finds them historically fallen into the several religio-cultures of man, first by analyzing and systematizing them into

autonomous meaning-wholes and then by evaluating their respective contribution to the progress of the ship of humanity towards those ideals. Obviously, Christianity is only one of the religio-cultures of humanity. Its history, with all that it contains, is the history of one of the religio-cultures of man, and, therefore, does not stand on the same level of generality as the history of religions. Nor can it in any way determine the work of the history of religions. The Christian may certainly hope that at the end of the road, Christianity's claims for embodying all truth, goodness and beauty will be confirmed; but he will have to allow it to stand in line with the other religio-cultures of man, in wilful submission to the authority of judgement, that such a final vindication of his claim may be arrived at in a critical manner acceptable to all. A history of religions that is dominated or in any way influenced by Christianity, a history of religions which surreptitiously or openly seeks to vindicate Christian doctrine may be a handmaid of Christian theology, but not history of religions at all. This is so regardless of whether the materials studied are those of an extinct antiquarian religion, of a primitive religion with a handful of isolated adherents, or of a living world religion. Intellectual honesty is here most crucial, and must be satisfied before our loyalty to our religious traditions – indeed even at the cost of this loyalty if such sacrifice is necessary. And unless historians of religions agree on the priority of truth to Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist claims to the truth, then history of religions is doomed. The rules of the academic game, of the business of discovering and arriving at the truth, would be violated, and like the sceptics of latter-day value theory, the historians of religions may only seek to influence, to convert or subvert, but never to convince anybody of the truth. Therefore, the role of history of religions in a faculty of divinity cannot be in the least different from her role in a faculty of Islamic or Hindu studies. What is that role?

The material which history of religion studies is the history of religion; and in a divinity school, of Christianity. The history of Christianity covers a very long span of time and many peoples, and everything is important. But the purpose of history of

religions' study of the history of Christianity is to trace the development of ideas, to lay bare for the ready use of reason, the genesis, growth and decay of Christian ideas against the background of social as well as ideological realities in the midst of which the ideational movement had taken place. The divine providential element cannot enter in this tracing as a factor, as a principle of explanation. This is not because history of religions is an atheistic science which does not believe in the presence of such element. On the contrary, the discovery of this element and its establishment for reason is the final purpose of the discipline as a whole. Rather, it is because divine providence never operates in the abstract, but always implies a plenum of real determinations. It is precisely the job of history of religions to discover this plenum, to analyze and expose its contents and relations, to admit the providential element here is *ipso facto* to put an end to the investigation. And since Christianity has not been an immutable and eternal pattern, frozen for all times and places, which the historian of religions can study once and for all, but a continuing development – that is to say, Christian history is not the development of a pattern, but the pattern itself is this development – the history of religions should find in the history of Christianity the richest field of ideational development.

To illustrate what I mean, let us take a closer look at the Old Testament. When the Reformation repudiated the religious authority of the Church, it vested that authority in the Scripture. When, later, the Christian mind rebelled against all authority except that of reason, sought enlightenment and observed a stricter moralism and a wider social liberalism, the Old Testament appeared unacceptable because of its running counter to these ideals. And with the Western Christian's discovery of 'the world', the Old Testament's particularism, election, promise, remnant, and overdrawn political, social, and ideological history of the Hebrews lost its appeal and became something alien, whose acceptance depends upon fresh *Vergegenwärtigung*, or a making-meaningful-in-the-present, of its data. It was a great challenge which Christian scholars met by developing a critical science of the Old Testament. Out of this criticism a number of Semitic

disciplines developed which added great contributions to human knowledge. And yet, there is hardly a Christian book on the Old Testament which does not try all sorts of *Heilsgeschichte* and allegorical interpretation acrobatics to re-establish the Old Testament as holy scripture *in toto*, though not verbatim; i.e., to read into it by means of all kinds of *exegeses* a confirmation of the articles of Christian dogma.

True, the Old Testament as a record of the history and ideologies which surrounded, preceded, gave birth to or furnished the space-time human circumstance of revelation, is necessary. But Christian scholars do not read the Old Testament in this fashion. For them, it is all one consistent puppet-drama, operated by God to the end that the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection – in short, Redemption as Church dogmatics knows it – may result. To this author's knowledge, no Christian scholar and no historian of religions has as yet applied the techniques as well as the dogma-free perspective of history of religions to the Old Testament as a whole. As a result, no Christian thinker fully appreciates the revolution in religio-culture which Jesus initiated, for Christian dogma binds him to the notion that the Church is a new Israel, new to be sure, but nonetheless an Israel. The sanctity of the new Israel is thus extended to the old; and this bars any condemnation of old Israel, thus making it impossible to treat the breakthrough of Jesus as a revolution. For, a revolution is always against something. That something may be the circumstance of revolution, but it can never be good and desirable unless the revolution is bad and undesirable, and never divinely instituted unless the whole of history is equally manipulated by the divine hand. Nor was the revolution of Jesus directed only against one or two features of Hebrew religio-culture. It called for nothing less than a total radical self-transformation. A study of the Old Testament that is true to the discipline of the history of religions should show the genesis and development of that against which the revolution came, as well as the genesis and development of the stream of ideas of which the revolution came as an apex, as a consummation and crystallization.¹⁰ That the two streams are present in the later parts

of the Old Testament is granted. But the sifting of the two streams has never been done. Dulled by the constant attribution of sanctity to the whole history of Israel, the Christian mind has so far been unable to put the facts of this history under the proper perspective, and hence to distinguish the two streams. The nationalist particularist stream incepted by David, classicized and frozen by Ezra and Nehemiah; and the monotheistic universalist stream of the non-Judah and other tribes – the Schechemites within Palestine, the Aramaean kingdoms bordering on Palestine to the South and East, and generally, of the Semitic peoples migrating from the Arabian Peninsula – a tradition classicized by the prophets and brought to the apex of revolution by Jesus. It takes the dogma-free history of religions to undertake a yet higher kind of Old Testament criticism, namely, to sift the Old Testament materials into that which is Hebraic or Judahic – which can never be Christian in any sense – and that which is universal, monotheistic, ethical and Christian.

To take another example: Without a doubt the tradition of ideas which became the orthodox doctrine of Christianity is at least as old as St. Paul and probably as old as the Disciples. Equally, there must be no doubt that there were other traditions of ideas which were not as fortunate as to become Orthodoxy's dogma, but which were equally as old. Indeed, some of these other traditions were even prior. Firstly, they were essentially continuations of the Semitic tradition, whereas Orthodox Christianity built her ideational edifice primarily as a Hellenic structure. Secondly, if the advocates of the Old Testament have any point at all it is certainly this, that the divine revelation of Jesus has come within the space-time circumstance of the Hebrews, i.e., within the Semitic ideological context of the Old Testament, not within that of Homeric Hellas, or of the Hellenized Near East and Roman Empire. The truth, therefore, cannot be controverted that the Semitic character of Ebionite Christianity, of the Arian, Marcionite and Paulician traditions, for example, stands far beyond question as prior to the Hellenic tradition which became the Orthodox doctrine. Hence the latter must be a 'change' or 'transformation' of the former. The

Orthodoxy has coloured all Christian histories, and the most scholarly treatises still look upon the history of Christianity from the standpoint of the Orthodox dogma. Whereas we grant to the Orthodox historians the liberty to reconstruct their Orthodox tradition according to the categories of that tradition, what is needed is a history of Christianity which will present the various Christian traditions as autonomous meaning-wholes and then relate them to the Orthodox tradition in a way revealing as well as explaining the differences. Only such a history would be truly instructive concerning the formative period of Christianity – the first seven centuries. Only it will be concerned to tell the whole story of this development against the historical background of the social and ideological realities of the Near East and Roman Empire. The Orthodox evaluation of these traditions is valuable for the light it sheds on itself, not on the traditions it condemns. It is unfortunate but challenging that no scholar has yet used the source materials of the history of Christian ideas in the first seven centuries in order to bring to light the genesis and development of these diverse Christian traditions connecting them with the Semitic consciousness, the Hellenic consciousness or the mixed-up Semitico-Hellenic consciousness of the Near East (which all Christian historians confusedly call 'Eastern Christianity', 'Eastern Churches' and the like). That remains the task of the historian of religions in the field of Christian history. For it is he who, while rightly expected to read the Orthodox tradition under categories furnished by that tradition alone, is equally rightly expected to read the history of the other Christian traditions under their own categories, and then judge them all under the principles of meta-religion.

III. The Significance of History of Religions for the Christian-Muslim Dialogue

These two illustrations have not been picked at random. Together, they constitute not only the common grounds between the three world religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but equally the most important fields of contention between them.

And of the three religions, Christianity and Islam are here perhaps the most involved. The work that awaits the historian of religions in these two areas will contribute decisively towards constructive dialogue between these religions in addition to re-establishing a very important segment of the religious history of the majority of mankind.

The Old Testament is not only Hebrew scripture (or the divine law revealed to Moses and the nationalist history of an extremely particularist people) nor only Christian scripture (or, according to the dominant *Heilsgeschichte* school, the inspired record of God's saving acts in history culminating in the Incarnation). It is also Islamic scripture, inasmuch as it is the partial record of the history of prophecy, and hence of divine revelation.²¹ Indubitably, every one of these religions can point to something in the Old Testament substantiating its claim. But the whole truth cannot be on the side of any. Furthermore, no religion is, by definition, equipped to transcend its own categories so as to establish the historical truth of the whole which, as a religion, it interprets in its own way in order to suit its own purpose. Only the historian of religions measures to the task who would relate the ideas of the Old Testament to the history of the Hebrews as ancient history has been able to reconstruct it, holding in *epoché* both the Christian and the Islamic understanding of Hebrew scripture. But we may not make total abstraction of the Hebrew understanding because the Old Testament is, after all, a Hebrew scripture written in Hebrew by the Hebrews and for the Hebrews. The contents, however, are not strictly speaking all Hebrew materials. The ideological overtones of the scripture, namely, those set in the books of *Genesis* and *Exodus*, are Hebrew versions of Semitic themes which belong to all Semites. Islam is a Semitic religion whose formative years were spent in Arabia, the cradle of all things Semitic. It is natural that the Islamic version of these themes is another version of ideas which are much older than 'J'. The Islamic claim may not, therefore, be brushed aside as external to the matter in question. For just as Christianity is 'a new Israel', Islam is 'an other Israel' legitimately giving a version of Semitic

origins which are as much, if not more, its own as that of the Hebrews.

Secondly, the examination by history of religions of the formative centuries of Christianity is equally involving for Islam. Islam is not a foreigner here. Islam is Christianity inasmuch as it is a moment in the developing Semitic consciousness of which the Hebrew, Judaic and Christian religions were other moments. That is why Islam rejected neither the Hebrew Prophets nor Jesus but, recognizing the divine status of their missions, reacted to the assertions of Jews and Christians regarding them. Although the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and his first Muslim followers were personally neither Jews nor Christians, yet their ideas were in every respect internal to the Jewish and Christian traditions, affirming, denying and in some cases transcending what Jews and Christians have held to be or not to be the faith of Adam, of Abraham, of Noah, of Jacob, of Moses and of Jesus. The 'Christianity' which Islam is, therefore, is an alternative to Orthodox Christianity; but it is as much Christianity as Orthodox Christianity is. Neither is Islam's Christianity an alternative posed *in abstracto*, as a discursive contradiction or variation, but *in concreto*, a historical alternative. Islam too did not come about except 'in the fullness of time' but this fullness consisted in the attempt by Orthodox Christianity to wipe out the Christian alternatives to itself. In the first century of Islam, the greatest majority of its adherents had been Christians in disagreement with Orthodox Christianity concerning what is and what is not the revelation and religion of Jesus Christ. Islam is certainly a Christian revolution with as much connection to Jesus as Orthodox Christianity can claim. We should not be misled by the fact that the Islamic revolution within Christianity reached farther than what it had originally set out to accomplish. The fact is that Islam was no more new than the religion of Jesus was in respect to the religion of the Jews. The continuity of Jesus' prophetic thought with the spiritualizing and internalizing thought of Jeremiah and the pietism of Amos and Micah is recognized and confirmed by Islam. Jesus' ethic of intent is, in Islam, the *sine qua non* of morality. Jesus' notions of the unity of

the Father, of His fatherhood to all men, and of his love-of-neighbour – in short, his ethical universalism, is not only honoured by Islam but rediscovered as essence of that Semitic consciousness which chose to migrate from Ur as well as from Egypt.³² On the other hand, the opposition of Jesus to Judaic particularism is universalized in Islam as the opposition of the universal brotherhood under the moral law to all particularisms except the Arabic Qur'ān which is the expression of this opposition. Therefore, there can be no doubt that Semitic Christianity had itself developed into Islam, and that the latter's contention with Orthodox Christianity is only a backward look within the same stream from a point further down its course – in short, a domestic recoupment within the one and same Semitic consciousness itself.

Despite this domestic nature of the contention between Islam and Christianity, neither Christianity nor Islam is really capable of going over its categories in the examination of the historical facts involved. Only a complete suspension of the categories of both, such as history of religions is capable of, holds any promise. The historical truth involved must be discovered and established. If, when that is done, either Christianity or Islam continues to hold to its old versions and views, it would do so only dogmatically, not critically. And we may hope that under the impact of such re-establishment of the formative history of Semitic consciousness in its Judaic, Christian and Islamic moments, the road would be paved for some dogma-free spirits, loyal to that consciousness, to prepare the larger segment of mankind for meeting the challenge of the world-community. So, too, such re-establishment of the history of Semitic consciousness makes possible a new reconstruction of Christian religious thought which does not suffer from dependence upon epistemology. From the days of Albert the Great (1200–80 CE), attempts at reconstruction have been made on the basis of the philosophy that is currently in vogue. That is why every systematic theology, or reconstruction, fell down with the fall of the epistemological theory on which it was based. That is why the current systematic theologies will also fall as soon as a new

epistemology rises and establishes a reputation for itself. What is needed is a reconstruction 'supra-philosophies' which does its work within the Orthodox doctrine without external aids, by re-investigating its formative period. This doctrine, as the Orthodoxy itself holds, is largely the work of men, of Christians, of majority-resolutions or otherwise of synods and councils, whose 'inspired' status ought to be once more investigated. A reconstruction that does not re-open the questions resolved at the Pre-Nicene Synods, at Nicaea (325 CE), at Constantinople (381 CE), at Ephesus (431 CE), and at Chalcedon (451 CE) will not answer the demands that have been made by Muslim converts from Christianity and are now beginning to be heard from the more recent Christian converts in Asia and Africa. It is not surprising that voices like that of the Rev. U. Ba Hmyin made itself heard at the last Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi calling for a reconstruction of Christian doctrine as radical as the Hellenic transvaluation was of Semitic Palestinian Christianity.³³ What is surprising is the fact that the World Council never responded to this formidable challenge.³⁴ The greater difficulty, however, is not the impending doctrinal separation of Afro-Asian Christianity from Western Christianity, but the increasing impatience with or lethargy to this Western doctrine on the part of lay Western Christians. The soul of the modern Christian is unmoved by the doctrinaire assertions of *Heilsgeschichte*, of the fallenness of man, of the trinitarian conception of divinity, of vicarious suffering, of ontic Redemption, of the elected and exclusivist status of the Church. What is needed is a genuinely new rebirth. And it is a rebirth which must begin by saying a resolute 'No!' to Irenaeus's (c. 130–c. 200 CE) claim that, '... Those who wish to discern the truth ... [must do so in] the tradition and creed of the greatest, the most ancient church, the church known to all men, which was founded and set up at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul. For with this church, because of its position of leadership and authority, must needs agree every church, that is, the faithful everywhere ...'³⁵ What the Christian participant in the Semitic stream of consciousness needs is to outgrow the

un-Christian fixation of Irenaeus which asserts: 'There is now no need to seek among others the truth which we can easily obtain from the church [of Rome]. For the Apostles have lodged all that there is of the truth with her, as with a rich bank, holding back nothing . . . All the rest are thieves and robbers . . . The rest . . . we must regard with suspicion, either as heretics and evil-minded; or as schismatics, puffed up and complacent; or again as hypocrites, acting thus for the sake of gain and vain glory.'³⁹ For this, history of religions must teach the Christian anew, against the wisdom of Tertullian,⁴⁰ that Apostolic Succession – even if its historicity is granted – can be an argument only if the heirloom is biological or a thing that can be given and taken without suffering change; that since the 'heirloom' is ideational, and in the absence of a Jesus-Qur'an frozen verbatim with the categories under which it can be understood as it must have been by its mouthpiece, the decisions of the Church of Rome stand on a par with the pronouncements of a Priscilla-Miximilla team, and those of Irenaeus on a par with those of a Cerinthus (c. 100).

In Response to Dr. al-Faruqi

Bernard E. Meland

Let me say at the outset that I share the concern which I detect behind the statements in Dr. al-Faruqi's paper. One senses here a crying out for truth and integrity in religious faith, for instruments of scholarship that will enable discerning men of faith to attain such integrity, and the hope that all religions, but particularly those of the Semitic strand, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, might be brought into a closer bond on the basis of such scholarly inquiry.

At times it seems that all Dr. al-Faruqi means to plead for is an overarching fund of tested historical facts about the history of each of the several religions which will stand over against every

biased, dogmatic tradition that would colour, distort or ignore these facts in order to concur with its vested interests. This was precisely the aim of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* of Christian historians in which the early Chicago School participated, or emulated, and to which they made significant contributions. Many of the facts which Dr. al-Faruqi mentions in his two illustrations toward the end of his paper are explicitly noted in these writings, e.g., 'The genesis and development of that against which the revolution (of Jesus) came, as well as the genesis and development of the stream of ideas of which the revolution came as an apex, as a consummation and crystallization'; 'the sifting of the two streams', distinguishing between the nationalistic particularistic and universal stream; 'the relation of Jesus' personal outlook and faith to Jewish antecedents', particularly that of the Hebrew prophets.

The citing and tracing of these origins and developments, antecedents and relationships was the burden of some of those early handbooks such as J.M.P. Smith's *The Prophet and His Problem*, *The Prophets and Their Times*, and S.J. Case's several works, especially his *Jesus – A New Biography*, *Social Origins of Christianity* and *The Evolution of Early Christianity*, to mention some early studies of this school. Cf. also H.J. Cadbury, 'Jesus and the Prophets', *Journal of Religion* (November 1925).

Since their time, however, the problem of faith and history has become more acute and troublesome. On the one hand, it is not clear just how this fund of historical fact is to be used in correcting the vision of faith, and whether it reaches the level of the faith response at all. Furthermore, and perhaps more important critically, it is not clear to contemporary Christian scholars that facts, such as these earlier historians presumed to be disclosing, are really facts of history, and whether in fact, explicit sources or resources exist that will enable the scholar to get at such facts. History, so it seems, strangely and ironically rests back upon documents which turn out to be the reports of faith. And what was taken to be historical data, pure and simple, thus looms as a mirage that may not be taken at face value. This is the haunting spectre which has dominated the horizon of Biblical scholarship

since Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, and the Form Criticism of subsequent years. Some present-day scholars appear to be wriggling out of the dilemmas which these issues have created; but I, for one, have yet to be convinced that this road-block to historical data has actually been cleared away.

Thus, while I yearn to have the clear-sighted view of historical data that would yield access to the undisputed facts of history which could then serve as a guide or norm for judging the accuracy of all claims of faith, I am by no means as assured as Dr. al-Faruqi seems to be that such undisputed facts are available to us.

Even so, I would press for pursuing such historical inquiry despite its uphill nature. This I think, is the spirit of disciplined inquiry – a pursuit of truth and fact against all odds; but I would have to do so with more modest aims than the ones to which Dr. al-Faruqi aspires – not with the messianic hope of a meta-religion, but with a dogged and dedicated concern to wrest from this complexity, some clarity of vision that will enlighten the witness of faith.

But there are indications to suggest that, in saying that 'the historian of religions is above all concerned with truth', Dr. al-Faruqi is pressing for something deeper and more basic than a norm provided by historical facts. Here he does me the honour of suggesting that what I have set forth as man's primordial ground, opens the way for providing a meta-religion, capable of summoning all religions to the truth that underlies and unites them. But at the very point that I appear helpful, I fail the historian of religion because, while I 'seek that reality on the level which properly belongs to it', I 'identify it in such a way as to make any knowledge – and hence any methodological use of it – impossible.' What is that way of identifying this underlying reality, which leads me to failure? It is my reversal of the conventional statement of the ontic relation between primordial reality and its concrete actualization, thus 'becoming the absolute dependence of the universal to the particular. For this twist', says Dr. al-Faruqi, 'no reason is given; and its net purport is the resolution to recognize only the particular as given, thus closing the gate to any reliable knowledge of the universal' (pp. 178–9).

Let me try to offer some explanation for this twist:

Why is the primordial universal dependent on the particular? Because the primordial as given in our life in God conveys the relational ground of all that exists, but it assumes concrete existence only through the cultural and individuated structures available to creative events in any time or place. What I have called primordial, as being the universal ground in which all men share, and out of which all men have come, as created events, is a depth of reality in which history is lived, in which individuated and culturally shaped human lives find their ultimacy as a referent beyond each particularization of their cultural history. In this sense, all men have a primordial sense of their unity and oneness as children of the living God, which stands in judgement of their particularizations, as reality stands over against reason, ultimacy over immediacies; but this universal ground is not in itself available to our calculations, or judgements, which can be lifted up and formulated as a universal measure of all concrete faiths.

Knowledge of this universal measure we do have as lived experience. Knowledge *about* it we can have only in the form of an ontological vision of all men's existence, insofar as we can attribute each such concrete existence to the creative act of God. This vision, of all men's existence then follows from a presupposition that all men, regardless of faith or culture, have their lives in God, and with varying degrees of prehension, in relation with other men.

Now if Dr. al-Faruqi means by 'meta-religion', simply this kind of ontological vision issuing from an understanding of the creative act by which all men came to be, which will serve to express in a structured and cognitive way what is daily experienced in the history that is lived within any culture, I should gladly concur. My own abstract understanding of man as man in relation to his communal ground, affords me such a cognitive reminder in giving universality to my understanding of the Christian image of man, and of its relation to all other historic images of man.

But if by meta-religion, Dr. al-Faruqi means to establish on

this basis a universal religious norm, presumably speaking out of a more authentic and comprehensive grasp of what is implied in all religions, thereby enabling the comparative historian of religions to distil from each concrete faith, its universal component, I must demur. For this seems but to relapse into Enlightenment habits of thought wherein universal judgements were sought in a rational abstraction, leaving concrete and historical realities but pale accidents of contingent conditions.

But however this is to be understood, let me see if I can grasp what Dr. al-Faruqi means to convey in his suggestive statements where he undertakes to purge my theory of its 'relativist trait'.

This reduction of all human knowledge to relativity, to the particular cultural structure of the subject, says Dr. al-Faruqi, stems from a 'mistaking of relationality for relativity'.

I would qualify this statement in certain respects: I have not meant to imply that all human knowledge is relative in the sense that no universal judgements on any subject can be achieved. All knowledge does initially arise within a cultural orbit of meaning; and for some human beings, this cultural enclosure is never dispelled. Insofar as data with which the mind concerns itself is sufficiently public and communicable, a high degree of universal exchange of experience and judgement is possible. The physical sciences have achieved almost universality in their areas of inquiry and communication. Scientific thinking as a mode of inquiry has not been universally accepted – East and West still differ in their responses to it; but wherever scientific thinking occurs and is accepted, universal judgements are achievable.

However, to the degree that data and the human response to data involves internal awareness, feeling tone, as well as bodily feelings that reach to a level of response that escapes conscious awareness, discourse about it as well as inquiry into it confronts an almost impenetrable barrier. Thus the data of art and religion have been less amenable to universal judgements than the sciences.

Now to speak of a science of religion or of art is to speak of a special mode of response to these human creativities. At the outset it must mean a selective response, concerned only with

publicly available data. It is quite possible to achieve a high degree of reliable scientific opinion in this area of inquiry that can serve limited goals – e.g., strategy of dealing with various cultures during war time, or even in times of peace. This provides a kind of functional truth about religions that is useful for ulterior purposes. And it can be quite useful – both for good and for evil ends.

Insofar as the historian of religion aspires, as scientific historian, to go beyond the attainment of such functional truth (i.e., knowledge about the public concerns and behaviours of specific religious people which is demonstrably true) he encounters difficulties that stem from the ambiguities that go deep into the texture of existence itself, not to speak of cultural relationships and the relativities they impose.

Now I would be willing to argue for a considerable amount of refinement and discipline in the approach of one human being to another, and of one religious group to another. And I would be willing to hold out for considerable improvement in sensitivity and rapport between discerning, inquiring minds from various religious cultures as they probe the meaning of the religious response in these various concrete situations. And the degree of mutual understanding, sympathetic insight and possible inter-relationship between peoples of different faiths made possible by such explorations would in itself justify the effort to make it. Thus my statements are not to be taken to imply a cynicism about pursuing such a task, or a dogmatic rejection of the effort at the outset. My concern is to avoid the kind of oversimplification, and self-deception, which lay back of Enlightenment efforts at universality in religion, and the kind of universalist dogmatism that characterized men like Voltaire (1694–1774), and which have continued to characterize devotees of a world faith ever since, leaving the mystery and depth of concrete religious faiths wholly uncalculated.

It does not follow that one is forever limited to the fixations of one's cultural nurture, once one is committed to enter upon a negotiation of meanings with a person of another culture. Despite the opaqueness of meaning which each one shares, and

the persisting occasions of impasse that periodically arise, any interrelation of various orbits of meaning must give rise to trans-cultural understanding of a sort – that is, a fund of negotiated meanings which stand simultaneously in a relation of fulfilment and judgement toward each of the participating faiths – fulfilment in the sense that the revelatory insight of affirmation of one's faith, seen in another context of historic experiences, or in relation to comparable revelatory insights under different circumstances, takes on new proportions of meaning and applicability; judgement, in the sense that candid confrontation with the witness of faith from other historical experiences conceivably can shock one into realizing the limited or doctrinaire resolutions or interpretations given to such revelations within experience and history.

The conviction that the realities of faith, consonant with our life in God, underlie, and continually stand in judgement of the meanings we ascribe to such revelatory experiences, implies that truth is always marginally apprehended in any witness of faith. Among disciplined minds participating in such marginal apprehensions a critical exchange of apprehensions and meanings can hopefully yield some degree of clarification or understanding that will stand in judgement of both witnesses of faith. If it is a true negotiation of meaning bent on as full a degree of the truth of actuality as possible, (and not just a grudging compromise of understanding) that which arises out of the exchange will be a new emergent, a new occasion of human understanding transcending the cultural orbits of meaning. I would still recoil from calling it *the truth*, as if to equate this human knowledge with reality itself; but it would be an advance upon culturally and individually limited knowledge, such as each one in his separate enclosures is bound to exemplify.

But now, can we say that our primordial unity is conveyed to us through the structure of our humanity – i.e., through the structural character of ourselves as human beings? This can be conveyed with or without intruding any specific cultural or individuated characteristics. I thought Karl Barth was getting at this in designating our humanity under four aspects: (1)

'Openness to another as a human being. (2) 'Talking and listening to another. (3) Being there for another. (4) Doing all this joyfully.'

Now this borders on being a poetic way of speaking of a kind of responsiveness that is peculiarly human and is in contrast to the responsiveness of other structures in nature. Each of these aspects is expressive of the notion of encounter, and presupposes an underlying communal ground – or, if this is too ontological, a propensity toward acting in communal ways.

There may be various ways of presenting this primordial, structural dimension of our humanity. A Christian way of saying it is to speak of our life in God. Perhaps this is suitable for Judaic-Christian-Muslim imagery – for it arises out of the notion of the Creation of man as it appears in the Hebraic myth.

Scientifically speaking, this would point up the specific level of mutations that formed our particular species, and would simply designate 'our kind' among the many varieties of *mammals*; e.g., there is a basis here for stressing common ground, common possibilities, common obligations and opportunities – by way of fulfilling or actualizing the evolutionary occasion visited upon us. In Havelock Ellis' (1859–1939) words, 'Our supreme business in life – not as we made it, but as it was made for us when the world began – is to carry and to pass on as we received it, or better, the sacred lamp of organic being that we bear within us.'

This is an affirmation of universalism resting back upon our primordial beginnings in nature that has motivated much of scientific idealism since the beginning of the modern era and continues to speak forth through modern scientists and publicists like Julian Huxley (1887–1975).

Metaphysically, this primordial universality of man is presented in terms of the process of creativity as it relates to the human structure. While metaphysics is less bound to the cultural idiom than religion, it is more expressive of it than science. For example, Whitehead, in canvassing the possibilities of imagery capable of conveying the metaphysical portrayal of our primordial beginnings, toys with the idea of adopting the Hebraic myth of creation, but rejects it on the grounds that it is too primitive for conveying sophisticated notions of metaphysics,

and instead chooses to build upon the Platonic myth. Incidentally, my own variation from Whitehead stems from the fact that I have taken his basic notions and related them to (perhaps should say translated them in terms of) the Hebraic myth of Creation.

Despite this involvement in the cultural idiom, metaphysics generally provides an opening beyond its chosen idiom, thus enabling its structural meaning to be given a different or varied rendering in terms of other idioms, yet conveying much the same basic vision of intelligibility.

The language of religion, especially of theology, is least fitted to speak universally, except in terms that are available or meaningful to the cult or culture in which its particular witness of faith has taken form. This is because its initial focus has always been upon concrete occasions, demanding release from suffering, frustration or failure; or giving expression to wonder, gratitude, ecstasy, or vital joy. The universal reference has taken the form of a projection beyond the particularizations of these occasions; it has not arisen out of a universal judgement or proposition. For example, the myths of Creation in Hebraic history follow upon the redemptive experiences of the Exodus. God acted in the particular events of Hebraic history, and from these mighty acts, generalizations presuming to be of a universal character were deduced.

The projected universalisms that thus arise from the various religions cannot be expected to yield a common vision of man; for they presuppose in each instance particularizations that may not be universally shared. Nor is it likely that the confrontation of one religion by another in terms of its religious witness will give rise to generalizations that can be readily shared. You will note that I said 'readily' shared. I am not ruling out the possibility that they may in time come to be shared after other kinds of exchanges have occurred; but the point I am making is that the generalizations drawn from specific occurrences within a cultural history are not *prima facie* universal judgements that can be recognized as such outside the cultural imagery. When they are

projected within any religious faith, they bear the imprint of the cultural history.

It is possible, however, that the act of bearing witness to experiences of religious import to a people, or of relating accounts of such religious acts of witness that have occurred within one's cultural history, can be heard and assimilated within another cultural history. Much will depend here upon the degree to which the bare human structure of response is conveyed – bare in the sense of being primordial, i.e., a response expressive of the structural capacities of *any human being*, in contrast to a witness of faith that is laden with doctrinal interpretation and implications. If human capacities and their structural responses can be laid bare in such acts of witnessing, a genuine encounter at the primordial level of humanity can be supposed. Except as this takes place, however, one can only assume that a barrage and clash of symbols has occurred.

Now if one asks, how may some measure of this genuine encounter between human beings be assured? I can only say that it can be facilitated by every effort to think beyond the cultural or cultic imagery in the very act of thinking and speaking within this idiom. This is a way of saying that the more a cultic faith and its theology is informed by, or conversant with, the sciences and metaphysics, the more likely it is to be open to dimensions of meaning that carry the cultic speech beyond its cultural orbit into considerations that can recall or re-vivify its universal import as given in its primordial ground.

Science and metaphysics are not so much resources to be integrated with cultic speech, as counter irritants, or better still, reflectors, casting a beam of light upon particularized mythologies, or exposing its cultic claims that are sheer idiosyncrasies and thus releasing (or compelling) its mythos to look illimitably far.

To the extent, then, that theologies or religious witnesses partake of the criticism and challenge of the cultural disciplines, one can expect them to be summoned to a vision of the human reality in experience that is sharable by all religions without sacrificing what is definitive and decisive in its own faith.

Notes

1. Professor Long's note: 'Dr. al-Faruqi's portrayal of the history of the discipline of history of religions presupposes that the history of this discipline was carried out along lines which were quite rational. Such was not the case. The history of religions is a child of the Enlightenment. This is to recognize that the history of religions had its beginnings in a period in which the Western world was seeking some rational (as against a religious) understanding of the history of man's religious life. The history of religions during the Enlightenment was for the most part rationalistically and moralistically oriented. Prior to this time, the understanding of religion from a religious point of view yielded even less on the level of scientific understanding, for while the medieval theologians were able to see Islam, for example, as a religion and not as an instance of a truncation of reason, it was nevertheless relegated to the level of paganism since it did not meet the standards of the one true revelation. The rationalistic interpretation of history had the value of establishing a criterion other than revelation as the basis of religion. This meant that to a greater degree the data of the non-Christian religions could be taken a bit more seriously. This, along with universalism of the Enlightenment and the reports from colonizers and missionaries established a broader if inadequate basis for the understanding of other religions and cultures, though in several instances the final revelation of God in Jesus Christ was transformed into the final apotheosis of reason in the Enlightenment civilization of the Western world.'

2. Professor Long's note: 'The definition of religion as "the Holy" or the sacred was an attempt to save the religious life of mankind from a reduction to dimensions of life which were inadequate as interpretative schema for the data which had been unearthed. The development of methodologies in this direction was directed against not only the understanding of non-Western religion, but equally at the rationalistic and moralistic understanding of Western religion. It is not, therefore, strange that among the leading historians of religion are to be found a Lutheran archbishop and a German theologian. Participation in the religious life itself sensitized one to the availability of the religious reality for all men in all times and places. Rudolph Otto [1869-1937] advised those who thought the religious experience impossible to lay aside their books, and Nathan Söderblom [1866-1931] stated that he knew there was a living God, not because he was a Christian, but because all religions testified to this fact. To be sure, as Dr. al-Faruqi implies, the work of Otto and Söderblom restricted the meaning of religion, but only to save it and they were aware always of the relationship of the holy to the totality of man's life; witness for example, Otto's schematization which attempted to place all of the important dimensions of human life as originating in and deriving their sense of importance from the obligation of the holy in religious experience.'

'This specificity of the holy was paralleled with a specificity of the historical-religious object - the recognition of the individual, ineffable and unique in history. This de-rationalizing or in some cases, irrationalizing of history, grew out of their methodological approaches and constituted a critique of the rationalizing tendency of some of the prevailing philosophies of history - philosophies stemming from Kant [1724-1804] and Hegel [1770-1831]. In transforming the data of religion, historically defined, into rational notions, the rational notions prevailed as the

criteria of supreme validity; the religious basis of evaluation, i.e., revelation, was at most a provisional step towards a rational view. I submit that what Dr. al-Faruqi describes as the Christianizing and misunderstanding of Judaism and Islam derives from this tendency and not from the main-line historians of religions. It should also be noted that the same rationalizing tendency operated in the case of primitive Hindus and Buddhists.'

'The notions of the ineffability, irrationality, and irreducibility of the religious were designed to make a place for, or to hold open the criterion of validity which arises out of, the historical-religious data itself. The relationship or re-introduction to the validity of religion to all of life become the perennial problem of the discipline.'

3. The sense in which it does so will become clear as we discuss the systematization and judgement functions of history of religions, p. 168 ff; p. 174 ff.

4. Andrew Paul Ushenko, *The Field Theory of Meaning* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), p. 111 ff.

5. Consider, for a case in point, Professor Mircea Eliade, whose works (*Images et Symboles* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952); *Mythes, rêves et mystères* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957); *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1958); *Birth and Rebirth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958); *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959); *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959); etc.) constitute the worthiest attempt of the discipline to 'vergegenwärtigen' the archaic religions. 'We hold', Professor Eliade writes in the Foreword to his interpretive work, *Cosmos and History*, 'that philosophical anthropology would have something to learn - according to the universe. Better yet: that the cardinal problems of meta-physics could be renewed through a knowledge of archaic ontology.' Regardless of whether or not the book substantiates it, the claim by itself has grave significance not only for the discipline of history of religions in whose name it is made, but for 'the philosopher, and... the cultivated man in general... for our knowledge of man and for man's history itself.'

Another recent case in point is Charles H. Long's able argument for the claim that 'as a religious norm, it [monotheism] has always been there - an enduring structure of the religious experience itself'. ('The West African High God', *History of Religions*, Vol. III, No. 2 (Winter 1964), p. 342).

6. Mowinckel, *op. cit.*, Preface, p. xxii.

7. We should not mistake the advocates of *Religionsgeschichteschule* for historians of religions. Those who were not secularists were Old Testament theologians who, having faith in the dogma, interpreted the findings of Ancient Near Eastern history and accommodated them in what they called *Heilsgeschichte*. Herman Gunkel, perhaps the most famous name in that school, is a committed Old Testament theologian who asserts explicitly, in criticism of Franz Delitzsch's (1813-90) famous lectures *Babel and Bible* (tr. C.H.W. Johns, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1903) that 'in the depth of this development [Israel's history] the eye of faith sees God, Who speaks to the soul, and Who reveals Himself to him who seeks Him with a whole heart'. It would be utterly misleading to call him a historian of religions or to identify his methodology as 'history of religions'. Indeed, Gunkel is so committed to his theological ideas that, in the same 'critique', (it

reads more like a sermon) – he bursts into exclamations: 'What sort of a religion is it (the religion of Israel)? A true miracle of God's among the religions of the ancient orient! ... He who looks upon this religion with believing eyes will confess with us: To this people God hath disclosed Himself! Here God was more closely and clearly known than anywhere else ... until the time of Jesus Christ, our Lord! This is the religion on which we depend, from which we have ever to learn, on whose foundation our whole civilization is built; we are Israelites in religion even as we are Greeks in art ... etc., etc.' (*Israel and Babylon: A Reply to Delitzsch*, Philadelphia: John Jos. McVey, 1904, p. 48). Evidently, we must be very careful in calling men 'historians of religions', when 'historian of Old Testament' or 'historian of Christianity' would be far more appropriate.

8. 'Christianism' is the movement which, though older than Nicaea (325 CE), emerged from that council as orthodox Christianity, upholding a specific dogma – the Nicene Creed – as exclusively definitive of the faith of Jesus.

9. This has been well pointed out by Joseph M. Kitagawa in the opening essay on 'The History of Religions in America' in *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, ed. J.M. Kitagawa and M. Eliade (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), where he says: '... One must study the historical development of a religion, in itself and in interaction with the culture and society. One must try to understand the emotional make-up of the religious community and its reaction or relation to the outside world ... There must be added a religio-sociological analysis, in our sense of the term, the aims of which is to analyze the social background, to describe the structure and to ascertain the sociologically relevant implications of the religious movement and institutions' (p. 26).

10. To take an example from this author's forthcoming study of Christianity: 'The Fall' or 'Original Sin' is a datum of the Christian religion. We must first understand what it means discursively, by reading the definition and analyses of Hebraic and Jewish thinkers for the Old Testament precursors, and of Christian thinkers from the New Testament to P. Tillich. Having grasped the doctrinal development of the idea, we then relate it to the historical development of Christendom, showing how, in every stage, the Fall developed in answer to certain sociological and doctrinal developments. Thus systematized into a developing stream of complex ideas, each member of which is a network of a number of closely-related facts, this complex religious datum is then related in depth to the values which at each stage of the development, the datum was meant to and actually did, serve to realize. This last relation is usually more evident in the general literature of the civilization than in the strictly doctrinal statements.

11. 'No statement about a religion is valid unless it can be acknowledged by that religion's believers' (W.C. Smith, 'Comparative Religion: Whither – and Why?', *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, op. cit., p. 42).

12. See Fazlur Rahman's and this author's reviews of Kenneth Cragg's *Call of the Minaret and Sandals at the Mosque*, in *Kairoi*, 3-4 (1961), pp. 225-33.

13. Professor Long's note: 'I cannot deny that the discipline consists of reportage and collection of data, construction of meaning-wholes and judgement and evaluation, but these areas of the discipline cannot be separated so neatly; each

one implies the other. It is on this basis that I take exception to Dr. al-Faruqi's statement that 'The scientific character of an enquiry is not a function of the materials, but of what is done with them.' I should rather emphasize the fact that the scale determines the phenomenon. It is the method which gives us our data and this method represents a complex relationship between the objectivity and the relatedness of the data to the interpreter. This is what lay behind the *Methodenstreit* in Germany in the last century. Are there real differences between the constitution of the data of the human sciences and the natural sciences? Does the scale really determine the data? While I am not satisfied with the bifurcation which represented a resolution of the problem, I appreciate the problem. I would rather restate the problem in a different way: 'Is it possible for us to understand the human mode of awareness which presents reality to us as a totality?' Some forms of process philosophy take this question quite seriously but within the history of religions the analyses of primitive and traditional religions tend to describe the human awareness in these terms. Again, the sacred or the holy becomes an appropriate way of dealing with this issue.'

14. It was this consideration that misled Professor Kitagawa to assign to the history of religions a position intermediate between descriptive and normative (*op. cit.*, p. 19). He clearly saw the descriptive nature of the discipline when it studies the history of a religion, or when it appropriates the analyses of psychology, anthropology, sociology, philology, etc., and of scriptures, doctrines, cults and social groupings. But when he came to differentiate history of religions from the normative disciplines, he wrote: 'While *Religionswissenschaft* has to be faithful to descriptive principles, its inquiry must nevertheless be directed to the meaning (*sic*) or religious phenomena' (*ibid.*, p. 21). This concern with meanings is, in his view, sufficient to remove history of religions from the ranks of descriptive science. Evidently, he precludes the possibility of a descriptive treatment of normative content such as value-realist philosophy has been suggesting for a generation (cf. the tradition of Max Scheler [1874-1928], Nikolai Hartmann [1882-1950], etc.).

15. Professor Long's note: 'This point of Dr. al-Faruqi is well taken. It has to do with the inter-relationship of meaning-wholes. From a study of religions, we now ask, what is religion. I also concur in his criticism of Professor W.C. Smith's criterion for valid interpretation. I must, however, question the presuppositions underlying the very constitution of the meaning-wholes. For the historian of religion, such meaning-wholes exist but not simply as geographically and culturally defined units. The historian of religions should not begin his study by setting aside a certain number of religions and taking them in order to study them one after another. He should rather begin with forms of the religious life and an exhaustive study of these forms already leads him out of simply geographically and culturally defined units. The very fact that he supposes that he can understand that which is other leads him to a wide range of religious data. The meaning-wholes are for him already inter-related and thus the problem of their relationship is of a different kind. I am one of those historians of religions who does not like to hear the question put as the relationship of Christianity to the non-Christian religions. For me the issue is put more precisely when we ask the meaning of religious forms as valid understanding of man's nature and destiny. Any discussion of this issue leads us to empirical data, but

it also implicates us in a discussion which enables us not only to talk about the resources of our peculiar traditions, but also the resources of a common humanity – a common humanity which all living religionists may claim.

16. 'The History of Religions as a Preparation for the Co-Operation of Religions', *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, op. cit., p. 142.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 143–4.

19. Other examples betraying the same shortcomings are Albert Schweitzer's *Christianity and the Religions of the World* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1923); Hendrik Kraemer, *Why Christianity of all Religions?* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962); Stephen Neill, *Christian Faith and Other Faiths: The Christian Dialogue with Other Religions* (Oxford University Press, 1961); A.C. Bouquet, *The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1958); Jacques-Albert Cuttat, *La Rencontre des Religions* (Paris: Aubier, Editions Montaigne, 1957); R.C. Zaehner, *The Convergent Spirit: Towards a Dialectics of Religion* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), etc.

20. 'Theology and the Historian of Religion', *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. XLI, No. 4 (October 1961), pp. 263–76.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 265.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 265–6.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 272.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 275. Here Professor Meland finds himself in agreement with Michael Polanyi (*Personal Knowledge*, University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 266) who identifies the particular for knowledge as 'fiduciary framework' outside of which 'no intelligence, however critical or original, can operate' (Meland, op. cit., p. 271).

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 274–5.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

28. *Genesis*, II: 1–9.

29. Meland, op. cit., p. 265.

30. By distinguishing 'the earthly Jesus' of history from 'the heaven-exalted Christ' of dogma and 'the Pre-existent Logos' of doctrine, Shirley Jackson Case had an edge on the problem (*Jesus: A New Biography*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1927, pp. 2–5) which he lost in the presentation of the earthly Jesus. Discarding the evidence of the Gospels as projection onto the past of animosities and oppositions pertinent to the Church of the first and second centuries CE, Case regarded Jesus' task as being merely one of 'summon[ing] the Jewish people to a life in more perfect accord with the will of their God' (*ibid.*, p. 264), of deliver[ing]... a message of warning designed to augment righteousness in Israel' (*ibid.*, p. 342). This task, anticipated and fulfilled by John 'calling upon the people of Palestine to reconsecrate themselves to God in preparation for the Day of Judgement' (*ibid.*, p. 242), 'had first aroused the interest of Jesus' at his baptism and was adopted by him

incidentally on account of 'a heightening of emotion [attending his experience of baptism] that impelled him to assume the responsibilities of a new life-work' (*ibid.*, p. 257). Indeed, Jesus did not even envisage any global mission at all; for 'the range of his activities widened [only] when Jesus paid a visit to "the borders of Tyre and Sidon", which provided a setting for the story of his generous attitude toward the Syro-Phoenician woman' (*ibid.*, p. 269). The task of Jesus is thus diluted into one of simple reform. It was not a revolution against the moral decadence, tribalism and vacuous legalism of Judaism evidenced in both the Gospels and the Talmud because, for Case, there was no need for one – 'Jesus ... [having] more in common with them [Scribes and Pharisees] ... in his sympathies and aims ...' (*ibid.*, pp. 304–5), and 'fundamentally, the difference between Jesus and the contemporary religious leaders of Judaism ... [being] one of personal and social experience ... [merely] a neglect of legal niceties ... [and his being] a plebeian or' 'Amme ha-aretz' unhabituated to the more meticulous demands of the scribal system' (*ibid.*, p. 315). Where the Gospel evidence to the contrary is not due to the personal character of Jesus and his being untutored in the Law, Case regards it as 'occasional instances of conflict due to personal pique' (*ibid.*, p. 316). Obviously all this theorizing is due to Case's commitment to that aspect of Christian dogma which asserts the holiness of the Jewish people, as well as of their religious principles and practices as given and recorded in the Old Testament – a holiness which precludes all significantly original changes, even if God Himself is the author, and Jesus the instrument of the change. Case's 'Life of Jesus' is 'a new biography' as far as the 'heaven-exalted Christ and Pre-Existent Logos' are absent from it. But it is not historical and hence not strictly speaking a work of the history of religions.

31. I.R. al-Faruqi, 'A Comparison of the Islamic and Christian Approaches to Hebrew Scripture', *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, Vol. XXXI, No. 4 (October 1963), pp. 283–93. [See Chapter Four of this book.]

32. For a detailed analysis of the circumstances of these two migrations, see this author's *On Arabia: Vol. I, 'Urubah and Religion* (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1962), pp. 18–28.

33. 'When Christian witnesses moved out of the world of Jewish thought and understanding into the wider world of Greek language, thought and life, it was one of the most profound changes and crises of the Church. Greek thought, forms, language and modes of apprehension were taken over, and have since become part of the very life of the Church. These have become such a part of Christian theology that it is easy to see why some Asian people think that the Christian Gospel is intimately related to Western man. But now the Gospel has taken root in Asia. The question before us is: Is it possible to make the radical break from purely Western ways of thought, to do in Asia what first-century Christians did in the Greek world? Is it possible to utilize structures, ways of thought and life which are Asian even as Greek expressions have been used? This is not a simple question. It is often asked, if this was not a corruption of the Christian message as expressed in its Hebrew forms. But some such use was both possible and necessary for the Church to go about its missionary task. Such an effort seems both possible and necessary today. And it might well prove to be the greatest challenge that the Church has faced since the transition from Jewish soil to Greek soil was made. If theology is to

be ecumenical it must be able to utilize and confront systems and ways of thought and life other than those known as Western. No theology will deserve to be called ecumenical in the coming days which ignores Asian structures. It may use the term ecumenical, but it will really be parochial and Western only' (Assembly Documents, No. 1, November 19, 1961, New Delhi). It is noteworthy that this Christian Asian leader regards the Roman-Hellenic interpretation of Palestinian Christianity as 'a profound change' as well as 'a corruption of the [original] Christian message'.

34. As far as this author could gather, whether from the papers of the World Council of Churches Third Assembly at Delhi or from his interviews with a number of delegates to the Assembly, Rev. Hmyin's message passed 'like water on the back of a duck'. And in the report of the East Asian Section of the Theological Commission to the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order (Montreal, 1963) the formidable issue of Rev. Hmyin was neither discussed nor given statement in the findings. Indeed, the whole field of 'Christian Thought and Theology' was merely listed as one of the 'areas calling for a greater effort towards indigenization', as well as put under the express condition that such indigenization would not involve 'diminution of Catholic truth'. A statement of this 'Catholic truth' (obviously written by the secretary of the East Asian Section, Rev. J.R. Fleming, a Western Christian, for his East Asian colleagues) was entered in the Findings of the Montreal, 1963 meeting, in which we read: 'Christian worship is the glad response of the people of God to the gracious redemptive activity of God the Father, and Christ the Son, through the Holy Spirit. Christian worship, therefore, is both Christological and Trinitarian. To say it is Christological means that the central act in Christian worship is the proclamation of the good news of God's redemption and re-creation of humanity in Christ... This Christological worship is both individual and corporate, but the primary emphasis is on the corporate, since God's purpose in Christ is to create a new body of people, Christ's body. In Christian worship, therefore, man... becomes a part of the new humanity in whom God's purposes in creation are being fulfilled. His life is defined now in relation to God in Christ, and in terms of *leitourgia* and *laetitia*... To say Christian worship is Trinitarian means that it is offered to God in the light of this revelation of [H]imself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Because God is known in Christ, He is known as creator, for whose gracious purposes in creation men are now reclaimed and redeemed...' etc. (*Faith and Order Findings*, Montreal, 1963, SCM Press Ltd.; London, 1963, Report of the Theological Commission, pp. 32, 39). Obviously this is a report of 1963 Western Christian thought which the Asian representatives have been 'buffaloed' into countersigning. Or, if the voice of Rev. Hmyin is representative, however little, of Asian-African thought, the foregoing is a report of what the parent Western churches of 1963 had wished the Asian churches to regard as 'Catholic truth'.

35. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, iii, 1.

36. *Ibid.*, III, iii, 1; IV, xxvi, 2.

37. Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, pp. xx-xxi.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Common Bases Between the Two Religions in Regard of Convictions and Points of Agreement in the Spheres of Life

First. The Common Base

Islam and Christianity hold that God (may He be Glorified and Exalted) is transcendent and eternal; that He created the universe; that He created man and placed him on earth to fulfil His will; that the content of the divine will for man is faith and the moral law. Both religions hold man's fulfilment of the divine will, or obedience to the moral law, to be universal in essence and application. Finally, both religions hold that man's fulfilment of this destiny is salvation, felicity and happiness in this world and the next.

This religious content is claimed by both Islam and Christianity as constituting its very core. Each of them holds its possession of that core as God-given through revelation. Each of

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them regards past history in the light of that revelation, and future history as indicative of it, culminating in a Judgement Day on which all imbalances of history will be redressed under God's all-encompassing knowledge, justice and mercy.

Of course, there are differences; and these are natural. Within one and the same religious tradition, conceptualizations and figurizations of the core made at different periods of history may well differ. But whereas religious traditions develop and change, the religion is no more the same; another religion has taken its place. Had the core of Islam or of Christianity not remained discernibly the same throughout its long history, it would be impossible to separate its own from other traditions. Indeed, it would not even be possible to identify that tradition. All traditions would then make one amorphous heap of religious data. Islam and Christianity are distinct religious traditions whose comparison, on the level of core or essence is indeed possible and justified. However interesting to the historian of religions, to study the differences between the two religions, it is justifiable to ignore these differences to the measure that one may wish to focus attention on the original core, to emphasize or build upon it.

Since the purpose of the present seminar is dialogue, removal of mistrust and misunderstanding, reconciliation and cooperation, the strategy is justified. In fact, Islam and Christianity demand it; for both are equally religions of repentance and forgiveness, of mercy and compassion, of tolerance and good-will to all men. Both religions hold love of neighbour as *conditio sine qua non* of piety and righteousness. It is of their essence to seek man's reconciliation and cooperation.

There is another more compelling argument. Besides change and the vicissitudes of application and observance, there is another aspect to Christian-Muslim history which is equally true, and yet reassuring, reconciling and indeed uniting. That is Muslim-Christian history viewed against the background of a millennia of Near Eastern religiosity, beginning with history's dawn in Mesopotamia.

This longer history is the history of Arab (or 'Semitic')

religiosity.¹ Its theatre is the Fertile Crescent and the Arabian Peninsula. Its subjects are Arabs, the settled Arabs of the South of the Peninsula (*al-'arab al-'aribah*), and the migrant Arabs of the North (*al-'arab al-musta'ribah*) who emigrated to and settled in the Fertile Crescent in continuous smaller waves throughout history and continual tidal sweeps about once every millennium and a half. In the smaller waves, the Arabs penetrated the regions of the Fertile Crescent and prepared the ground for the succeeding tidal wave, or consolidated the effects of the preceding wave. These waves of humans transformed the ethnic nature of the inhabitants of the Fertile Crescent through inter-marriage; and their repetition through the ages made the Fertile Crescent as Arab as the Peninsula.² Arab migrations enriched the native languages with Arabic vocabulary and literary forms, after separation of these languages from the Peninsula and estrangement of their dialects by the relativities of their individual histories. They produced a re-crystallization of local culture and religion by re-affirming and clarifying the essential core of Arabian (Semitic) religiosity, by producing a new commitment to its dictates which would then lead to new expressions in nearly all fields of endeavour, from liturgy and constitutional law to mores and art.

Throughout the millennia, the spirit of this whole theatre remained essentially the same. It cannot be denied that history did produce variations. But these variations were repeatedly drowned in the re-affirmations of a new wave of immigration. Judaism, Christianity and Islam were the three latest moments of this Arab (Semitic) consciousness. They were preceded by countless other moments responsible for the flowering of Sumerian City States (3000 BC) of the Akkadian Empire (2400-2150 BC), of Babylon (1950-1500 BC), Nineveh (1450-1150 BC), etc., etc. In each of these moments, the new vision came in the form of a law, or of a law-reform, whose principal advocate presented to his peers as revelation of the will of God. Sargon of Agade (2334-2279 BC), Dipit-Ishtar and Hammurabi (c. 1792-1750 BC) faced different situations with differing prescriptions from those of the known prophets - Noah, Moses, David, Jesus

and Muḥammad (peace be upon them all). But the spirit which moved them and transformed the situations they presented was one. The essence or core of the movements these prophets initiated in history was the same. As the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: 'The Prophet's mothers are many; their religion is one.'

Underlying and undergirding all manifestations of culture and religion in the Fertile Crescent and Arabia was a core of first principles. Because they determined all culture and religion, these principles may properly be regarded as the base from which emerged all manifestations of the religious phenomenon in the Arab theatre. These first principles are four: First: Reality is dual and consists of two utterly distinct and separate beings, Creator or God, and creature or nature. The former is absolute and transcendent; the latter relative and phenomenal. Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece on one side, and Hinduism and Taoism on the other, identified God with nature and properly deserved description as idolatrous. While recognizing God as Creator and transcendent, ancient Arabs (Semites) associated with Him many of His creatures and they were rightly called 'Associationists' (*mushrikūn*). But many others resisted such aberration and stood firmly behind the absolute unity and transcendence of the divine Being. These were the ancient *ḥanīfs* who served as a springboard for the religious reform (revelation) of the succeeding cycle.³

Second: God, the Creator, communicates with His creatures through revelation. The content of revelation is the Law, or His will, which is the ought-to-be and ought-to-do of the creature. If the creature was created, it must have been so for a purpose entertained by its Creator. This purpose cannot be anything but the fulfilment of His will and this must be built into the creature precisely because it is creature. Discovery of any creature's ought-to-be and ought-to-do can therefore take place by reason through analysis of this innate pattern in nature. The other way of discovering the will of God is through direct revelation; that is, the immediate communication of the divine will by words. The will of God, i.e., theoretical and axiological truth, is therefore

knowable by one means or the other, or both. Otherwise creation itself, the nature of the creature and its distinction from the Creator would be incomprehensible.

Third: The creature would not be a creation of the purposive Creator if it were impossible for it to fulfil the Creator's purpose from its creation. Since it is His creature, He must have built into it the capacity to realize His purpose and placed it in a theatre – the universe – which is equally His creation and where such fulfilment is indeed possible. Both the creature and its environment must in themselves be good, for the Creator cannot be conceived to have started the world in deficiency, weakness or with an ulterior motive which assumes Him to be in debt or a liability to any other being.

Fourth: Since all creatures have the will of their Creator which is His purpose and their *raison d'être* embedded within them, they must be equipped with the ontological efficacy required for its fulfilment. This efficacy constitutes the laws of nature, whose validity is universal but whose necessity cannot go beyond or override the divine will. It stops at that will because it is its very instrument. This applies to man as much as it applies to stone, plant or animal.⁴ However, man is equipped with an additional faculty effective enough to reflect ontological efficacy towards new ends, the moral. This is in realization of a different 'higher' purpose of the Creator, namely, fulfilment by man of the distinctly moral values. This faculty is free because it is of its very nature to be so, a predetermined realization of any good being not moral at all. It follows that man is responsible for his exercise of this additional higher power. It also follows from the nature of responsibility that it must end in Judgement, in reward or punishment. Otherwise, moral responsibility would be meaningless vanity and a denial of the premise of the Creator's purposiveness. Moral responsibility also assigns to man his destiny, namely, to be a servant of the will of His Master and Creator in the World, His manor.

These four principles are the core and essence of Arab (Semitic) religiosity, of Arab (Semitic) *Ur-Religion*,⁵ clearly discernible in every moment in the Arab (Semitic) Stream and

every great movement that sprang from it. It is what united all these moments and movements into one stream, and distinguished the stream as a whole from other streams, notably the Ancient Egyptian, the Indian and the Chinese. It is the base which unites Judaism, Christianity and Islam and makes of them one great movement in human (global) history, despite all their differences. For these are indeed the work of history, of provincial and particularistic determinants which the core can and should overarch, and in terms of which all of them may and should be composed.⁶

Each religion must be credited with sublime achievement in the upholding and fulfilment of these principles in history. Islam has called this core *dīn al-ḥiṭrah* and defined man in terms of it. Every human creature, it proclaimed, is endowed with this core at birth, equally with all other humans, without the slightest discrimination. And, recognizing its permanence, Islam declared this *Ur-Religion* to be the *sensus communis* of mankind, and based it on a built-in *sensus numinis* by which the creature recognizes its Holy, transcendent (and thus numinous) creator.⁷ Equally, this is the avowed base of Islam's universalism, which Muslims everywhere have always assumed in all humans – indeed even in non-humans, as God's creatures.⁸ No wonder that Islam's consistent adherence to it reinforced its universalist claim and was responsible for Islam's exemplary respect for and tolerance of other religions.⁹ This great privilege of recognizing *Ur-Religion* for what it is, namely, the universal characteristic of all men, Islam declares, belongs equally to Judaism and Christianity.¹⁰ Islam does not therefore claim for itself superiority in this matter, but assigns to Judaism and Christianity a position on a par with its own.¹¹ All being God's, all representing God's will revealed through His prophets, they are all true, all crystallizing the one and same truth.¹²

No other base for inter-religious *rapprochement* compares with this. Conventions dictated by courtesy and diplomacy are the weakest. Those dictated by utility, whether designed to meet a special danger or circumstance, or to contribute steadily to material security and welfare, cannot stand in the face of any

storm; nor before any serious cause which sees itself *sub specie aeternitatis*. On the other hand, *rapprochement* based on innate and natural endowment is universal, eternal and constitutes the firmest foundation for the future. *Ur-Religion* is the strongest and worthiest foundation on which inter-religious *rapprochement* may be achieved and understanding and cooperation based. Because it is itself of a religious character – indeed it is itself religion, both Christian and Islamic – it needs no special effort to empathize with it to achieve understanding and insight. The investigator is guarded against reductionism; for *Ur-Religion* provides the one religious loyalty to command and to guide cooperation between the religions. The religions may be proud of the results of *rapprochement*, understanding and cooperation achieved on this base, because the base is their own. It is precisely what, in an insight of great moment, Muammar Gaddafi has called 'Godly Islam', meaning an essential core of Islamic doctrine purged of all elaborations, figurizations and prescriptivizations of history, and constituting the religion of God (*religio naturalis*) in the best sense of the term, which is at the centre of all religions and constitutes the core of all human religiosity.¹³ The developments of history which distinguish the religions and separate them may, when this common base is acknowledged, be repudiated as departures from the essential core. Or, they may be sublimated in case they are cherished as individuating cultural determinants. Or, they may be composed, i.e., harmonized and relatively synthesized with the essence into a new crystallization, adulterating but refigurizing the essence into a new historical expression.

I. The Fields of Cooperative Endeavour

1. In the Realm of Christian Awareness

There can be no cooperative endeavour without consciousness of the common base and shared purpose. This should not be restricted to the élite, if it is to bear fruit for history, but must become common heritage to all ranks of Christians

and Muslims. Accordingly, the general awareness of Muslims and Christians ought to be developed, until the truthfulness of the common base and the moral desirability – nay, imperativeness – imperative endeavour are recognized. The themes of common essence should extend and necessary cooperation ought to be promoted, defended and elaborated on all mass media, as well as in learned publications. Vatican II has paved the road for some rehabilitation of the truth about Islam within the mind of Christians.¹⁴ Its spirit must be continued in the communications of the Christian Church to its members and to the world, which ought henceforth to carry this message of good-will. Above all, the voices within Christendom¹⁵ which, as the allies of Zionism, continuously pour out a steady stream of anti-Islam, anti-Muslim and pro-Zionist propaganda that entices Christians to side with the Zionist-settler state,¹⁶ to reform Christian beliefs and attitudes so as to produce sympathy with that state,¹⁷ to reinterpret Christianity itself so as to make it better accord with the Zionist interpretation of Palestine's history,¹⁸ must be stopped forthwith. Nothing is more offensive to our ears, whether Christian or Muslim, as well as to common sense and our sense of history, than the attempt by these voices and agencies to literalize (and thus to en-landize and materialize) the divine covenant ceding real estate to a race,¹⁹ the irrevocability of a covenant lifting a race above mankind,²⁰ the blasphemous straight-jacketing of God by His own promise and His implied 'doggedness' in face of the immoral conduct of His 'elected people'. Nothing is more inimical to Christianity and to Islam than the tampering by these agents with Christian and Muslim understanding that Jesus was indeed the word of God, given to his virgin mother, Mary, to fulfil a divinely-ordained mission on earth, namely, to liberate man from the chains of literalism, legalism, and particularism which Jewish leaders had imposed upon their people, and to open anew the gates of salvation and felicity; that he was indeed the Messiah promised by the earlier prophets. Those naïve Christians who concede points to their Zionist neighbours, unwittingly undermine Christianity itself. For, if the Zionist understanding of God's

relation to the Jews is correct, the Messiahship of Jesus falls into question; and the Church cannot be the new Israel. And if, as the *Geschichtlich*-minded scholars allege, every significant idea that Jesus came with was already claimed by the rabbis, his mission would not appear as divine as Christian tradition had led Christians to believe.

Fortunately, among Muslims, conviction and certitude in all these matters are beyond attack or doubt. For the messiahship of Jesus is a Qur'ānic point of faith and the falsity of Zionism and of all its claims is a living reality which the Arab Muslim experiences every day in the continued aggression and injustice of its settler state.

This should not, and in fact does not, belittle the need for sympathy on the part of Christians and Muslims for the Jew persecuted on account of his faith. Religious persecution is an abomination, equally condemnable by both Christianity and Islam. The wronged Jew is certainly entitled to redress, rehabilitation and compensation wherever his human rights have been violated. Assuredly, it is the greatest blunder to indict the Jew of today for a crime allegedly committed by his ancestors two thousand years ago. But it is no less great a blunder for the Jew of today to claim compensation for injustices committed by Christians through the centuries. Vicarious merit is not possible without vicarious guilt; and, as principles of human conduct and inter-human relations, both are repulsive to moral sense. Nor should the Christian tolerate the Jew's romantic attempt to reinterpret the whole of Christian history and theology in light of that unfortunate event, the 'Holocaust'.²¹ Indeed, the Jew is entitled to such romanticism only among his peers, the European Jews. The Jews of the rest of the world, of the Muslim World in particular, are entitled to a different view based on their own experience. It is as much tolerance and spiritual cruelty to force a European-Jewish view upon Christian Europeans as upon oriental Jews.

In brief, it should be said that Christians may not settle their relations with the Jews alone in isolation from the Muslims. The Muslim's view is relevant and must be taken into account. In

1960, the Vatican found fit to alter the Catholic liturgy by deleting the words 'perfidious Jew' from the Good Friday liturgy. By itself this is a noble gesture designed to ease the strain in Christian-Jewish relations. But did the Vatican require the Jews to alter their liturgy (reading the Torah) by deleting all hate-arousing epithets ascribed to the gentiles who in any Jew's understanding, include Christians, Muslims, and indeed the whole human race? In fact, any reader of the Torah with minimum standards of moral judgement could make a much better case of the need to censor and re-edit its text than that of any Christian liturgy whatever.

2. *In the Realm of Muslim Awareness*

Christianity is not Christendom. The Muslim must learn to distinguish the one from the other. It is a great intellectual achievement to do so, and it is a spiritual necessity if the Christian-Muslim dialogue is to continue and to succeed. Even when the 'villain' in any event is the Church itself, the Muslim must remember that the Church is not necessarily Christianity. Whereas the Church is made of fallible humans, Christianity is God's religion which cannot be indicted under any condition. The Qur'an has indicted some Christians, and poured lavish praise on others, because all Christians are human, capable of good and evil, of truth and error. As the religion which God taught Jesus and Jesus conveyed, however, Christianity is always innocent and infallible.

a. *The Question of Christian Colonialism.* It was Christendom, not Christianity, that was guilty of the two arch-enemies of the contemporary Muslim; colonialism and mission. Colonialism attacked the personal integrity of every man in the colonized territory. Through colonialism, Christendom, and not Christianity, robbed the Muslim of his liberty to express his thought, to assemble with his peers, to act in any field, including the education of himself and his own children. In many cases, it physically uprooted man from his land and dwelling and brought aliens to settle in his place. North Africa is littered with the remains of such colonial settlements, but the notorious

example of the millennium is Palestine, where the human person has been trodden upon, his personal dignity and integrity torn into shreds – and he continues to be victimized before our eyes to this very day. Even his right to complain of the injustice and aggression which befell him has been denied the Palestinian, until he chose to wrest that right with blood. Christianity is opposed to all this by nature. In perpetrating such crimes, the Christian was un-Christian, even if a Church prelate had blessed him or encouraged his venture.

It is morally and religiously imperative for Christians and Muslims to work together to lift this Satanic burden from its victims. Christianity is here the Muslim's true ally and friend. Against colonialism, Christianity teaches that man's personal freedom and integrity are inviolable and ought to be restored. It teaches that the works of colonialism, whether in its settler form (Palestine, the Arabian Gulf, Rhodesia, South Africa, Singapore and Malaysia, Indonesia, Cyprus), or in its neo-colonialist form where it acts from behind its quislings and puppets, must be stopped, pulled down and reversed. The Christian-Muslim dialogue ought to mobilize Christians and Muslims around the world to condemn and, where possible, to resist the colonialist acts of their governments or fellow-Christians in the name of Christianity. An unequivocal call to this effect from His Holiness the Pope would have great effect toward stirring Christian conscience to resist the Machiavellian, Satanic operations of Christendom's governments, to pool resources and concert efforts of all truthful Christians to help the victims re-assert their rights and regain their lost dignity as humans. The individual Christian cannot absolve himself of responsibility on the grounds that his religion is personal and politics and governments are the realms of Caesar. Fortunately, Christian thought freed itself from its old extremist individualism after the Industrial Revolution. *Pacem in Terris* and *Popularum Progressio*, the Pontifical statements of 1962 and 1970, stand as great monuments of Christianity's involvement in the processes of society and history.²² If Christianity successfully moves man to seek justice for and safeguard the personal integrity of Christian persons in

European factories and cities, that mind would function as well *vis-à-vis* Muslims in Asia and Africa. Otherwise, the Christian would deserve in addition to the indictment of racism that of insincerity, indeed of blasphemy.

b. *The Question of Christian Mission.* The second front on which Christendom, and not Christianity, sinned against human integrity is that of mission. In itself mission is morally and religiously imperative because it is the effort by man to enable other men to benefit from the supreme wisdom, the religious truth, appropriated by the missionary. It follows from the very nature of truth and religion – and hence of Christianity as much as of Islam – that it seeks to be known, to be believed in and observed by the greatest number. Mission is integral to *Ur-Religion*. Christianity and Islam are missionary *par excellence* to spiritual possessions because it knows them to be valid and good absolutely. The truth is always missionary; i.e., it wants to be known.

As directed to Muslims, Christendom's mission has betrayed this noble ideal. The betrayal, however, is not the work of Christianity but of its human, fallible and often gullible representatives. In many instances, Christian missionaries were caught in the workings of the colonial power, and used by the latter to advantage. Where they deliberately cooperated with the colonialist and helped him achieve colonial objectives, they made themselves guilty in the eyes of Christianity as much as of Islam. After the colonial territory won its independence and repulsed the colonialist, such insincere missionary changed his garb, and returned as an expert in medicine, education, agriculture, social work, or development planning. He exploited the acute need of the emergent world for such services, as well as the internal strains, dislocations and dissensions preceding and/or following national independence. In these cases, the missionary was not 'seeking the Face of God'. The Divine cause for him was a front, instrumental to the national politico-economic or cultural good which he deemed superior.

Unfortunately for Christianity, Christendom's missionary effort in the Muslim World did not succeed in establishing any

good intention. The inevitable connection with colonialism in the past, the persistent subversive machinations of neo-colonialism at present, the fact that parts of the Muslim World, such as Palestine and the Gulf, are still subject to settler-colonialism, make Christian missions in our generation utterly suspect and repugnant. This, together with the fact that the Muslim World is still largely underdeveloped, wanting in organization, national consciousness and integration, economic and political development, and is hence prone to subversion, the present missions are utterly out of tune with the realities of history and must be closed down and liquidated throughout the Muslim World. Their continued existence and activity constitute a terrible sore in Christian-Muslim understanding and cooperation. Christian mission, to be itself, will just have to postpone itself till another time. The overwhelming result of today's Christian missions in the Muslim World is what has been aptly called 'the rice-Christian', a real offence against God. Those who speak for Christianity and run her missions ought to do this in order to dissociate Christianity, the religion of God, from Christendom's exploitation, abuse and blasphemy.

c. *The Question of Christian Orientalism.* Christianity is also innocent of Orientalism, Christendom's effort to understand Islam and at the same time to undermine it. With the rise of European universities in the nineteenth century, many Jews, atheists and free-thinkers, men at the farthest removed from Christianity, joined ranks with Christians in the study of the religion and culture of Islam. Orientalism is responsible for many scholarly accomplishments, especially in the discovery, establishment and editing of classical Islamic texts. But as interpreter of Islam, Orientalism has only helped destroy the Muslim's confidence in Christendom.²¹ Barring rare exceptions, Orientalists had the double purpose of undermining Islam in the minds of its people and blackening its face in the minds of Christians. To achieve the first objective, Orientalism attacked the integrity of the Qur'ān, the personal character of the Holy Prophet, the authenticity of the *Hadith*. It imputed to the

Prophet's Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) the vile motives of vengeance, conquest for gain and power. It glorified factionalism among Muslims by defending the heresies and overemphasizing mysticism in which Islam lost its essence and became indistinguishable from other religions. Orientalists repudiated the greatness of Islamic civilization by explaining it away as a syncretistic copy of Byzantium and Persia; and, though they spared no effort to acquire, date, classify and exhibit the works of Islamic art in the museums of the West, they explained them vindictively as works produced in spite of Islam, or contemptuously as unoriginal adaptations from the pre-Islamic arts of the Muslim World. Whereas all these disservices and misdeeds are undeniably true, it is not correct to ascribe them to Christianity. But Christianity, and its honest and sincere adherents must come forward to denounce them. They must cooperate with the Muslims in their repudiation.

Whereas missions being financed and carried out by the Vatican State can be ordered stopped and liquidated, the works of Orientalists, being individual in nature and often financed by autonomous colleges and institutes, cannot be commanded to stop. What can be done, however, is to elbow such works out of circulation by the production and wide dissemination of honest works interpreting Islam correctly and produced jointly by Muslim and Christian scholars. Such works would be a service to scholarship, to world-learning as *humanitas*, enriching to any culture and enhancing Muslim-Christian understanding, respect and cooperation. This would also help remove the prejudice against Islam planted and nursed by centuries of ill-will, war and the misrepresentations of missionaries and Orientalists.

3. *In the Realm of Public Human Affairs*

Unfortunately for mankind, there is as yet no authority which speaks and works for the common man populating the six continents of the globe. Modern times have seen many a movement which claimed to speak for him but which soured or withered away without much accomplishment. The European Enlightenment soon dissolved into romanticism, extolling and

mystifying blood, race, feeling, land and the obscure medieval origins of nation and national culture. The French Revolution soured by becoming 'l'Empire'. The socialist and utopianist thoughts of the Industrial Revolution came to nought as machines exploited the common humans at home and dictated the acquisition of colonial markets and raw materials abroad. The American Revolution denied itself as it sought to monopolize the New World and establish for itself colonies in Asia. The Communist Revolution denied its claimed idealism, universalism and representation of the interest of the common man when its two world powers gave priority to consumerism at home, to 'Mother Russia' and 'Mother China' calls, and to playing 'the game of nations' in the world. For a brief moment, Nehru (1889-1964), Sukarno (1902-70), Tito (1892-1980) and Abdul Nasir (1918-70) represented the interests of the common man in the world; but only for a brief moment.

It is certainly time that some body or authority picks up the banner of the common man of the world. And it is most proper that this conference, representing the religious and moral conscience of Christendom and Islamdom do so. It should proclaim its spiritual base to the world and call men to rally themselves around it so as to constitute that authority. Such authority, based upon Islam and Christianity, and drawing its inspiration from their unique and single God, from their common pietism, their common ethics and humanism, would speak in the world for the ethico-spiritual base of all existence. It would defend the common man everywhere against injustice in all its forms, above all against aggression and colonialism, against the exploitations, subversions, brain-washing, puppetization or clientization of the common man. It would encourage the common man to respect himself, to take pride in and cultivate his legacy, to appreciate the role of both Islam and Christianity as civilizing forces. The work of such authority would naturally fall into departments answering the human need to solve ominous problems of modern times: Knowledge, Personal Ethics, the Family, Race, Materialism, Colonialism and National Competition and Nihilism.

a. *The Problem of Knowledge.* The present situation in philosophy is very similar to that of Athens at the time of the sophists. Modern Western scepticism had its roots in the liberation of the Western mind from the clutches of a dogmatic ecclesiastical authority and from scholasticism. Inspired by its fantastic gains in the natural sciences, reason waged a tremendous battle in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the cause of man's right to think outside of the alleged 'religious authority' and the categories of Aristotle. In face of persistent attack by British empiricism, reason in the West took to speculation, mixed itself with the shibboleths of romanticism and thus made itself even weaker and more vulnerable. Final collapse came with World War I, which pricked the balloon of idealism in the European universities hitherto dominated by Hegelian thought. Since World War I, Western philosophic thought has been dominated by scepticism, an exaggerated empiricism which recognized no truth except that given to sense. But sense could give only probabilities and these could furnish no base or anchor to metaphysics, ethics and aesthetics. Philosophy then lost its great concerns and degenerated into logic and semantics. Problems dissolved into questions of forms of speech and convention. Instead of 'wisdom', philosophy pruned itself down to giving only 'analysis'; and 'the schools of Athens', or their caricatures, reappeared to cater to an intellectual whimsy no longer determined by rational principle.

In the West, this scepticism has pervaded all fields. The worst to suffer were ethics and value-theory which became variations on the theme of utilitarianism, whether egotistic or democratic. History soon followed, spurred by earlier romanticism, to deny itself as a quest of past and continuing reality and stood on a par with fiction writing and propaganda. The turn of religion was not far behind. It, too, degenerated into a personal feeling which amounted to little more than arbitrary whim and/or 'folkishness'. The arts, for their part, mirrored this decline; and, finding themselves free from all standards, began to scoop up the nether-disvalues of human life in the name of the autonomy of the artwork or of that of the artist's person.

Islam and Christianity must rebel against this sad development. Both of them make exclusivist claims to the truth, and therefore assume that theoretical and axiological reality is knowable. Neither is consistent with scepticism; and neither can do without certainty of the veracity of what they claim. The Middle Ages work of Christian and Islamic rationalism to interpret religion and life ought to be reassessed and continued. Islam in particular has not only approved of reason, but declared it a perfection God had endowed upon man that he may discover therewith God's will in creation; indeed, to assist him in ascertaining the veracity of the content of revelation. The discovery by man of God Himself would not have taken place without reason. In the Qur'ān, God has presented the case of religion itself not as a myth, not as a stumbling block, but as rational, critical, apodictically certain truth.⁴⁴

b. *The Problem of Personal Ethics.* The European Renaissance was a victory for Greek humanism and naturalism as well as a setback for Christianity. Instead of God, the Renaissance set up man as the measure of all things. This trait never left the European soul. It grew and asserted itself with ever-growing vigour and pervasiveness. In modern times, this Greek humanism was reinforced by the exclusive emphasis on facts of human desire. As thinkers competed with one another to make their ethical theories more and more descriptive, the Western Christian learned not to go beyond those facts in his search for the moral imperative. The 'ought' and even 'normativeness' itself became functions of human desire.⁴⁵

At the turn of the century, European speculation followed the natural sciences in basing morality on the *facta* of matter, life and power. These were soon to lose their universality and become national as romanticism took possession of consciousness. To assert as grounds of the good instincts and desires which are all equally real, is to invite their fulfilment while denying that any other principle could overarch any conflicting ones among them. In default of such an instinct-transcending principle, no instinct

or desire may be preferred to another except arbitrarily. Just as the gods of Greece, the apotheoses of natural instincts and desires, plotted and counterplotted against one another, subject to no power but blind fate (which is really no controller at all but the assertion of each individual god's ultimacy), so in the person, the instincts tear him up into mutually-competing pieces without supplying a means of solving the conflict.

Whereas ancient Greece relied on Padeia to refine and beautify as well as to sublimate the conflicts which man lived in emulation of the gods, and whereas the Renaissance man was still subject to the precepts of the Christian Church, Western man today lives the conflicts without either refinement or discipline. Nietzsche (1844-1900) had even taught him to claim the right to 'fabricate' his own ethics; that is to say, to place the instincts in such order as they themselves seem to dictate, and to call honesty to them moral uprightness and resistance moral disease. With the particularist arbitrariness of romanticism, nations could assert the 'national will' as moral even though it sought to kill, to rob, to cheat and to exploit its victims.

Christian morals and their Jesus-ideal were pushed into the recesses of the soul of Western man, whence they influenced conscience but not action. Western man thus became divided against himself.²⁶ Having removed God's commandment from the field, as well as any *a priori* or categorical imperative by which he can resolve conflict, he wallowed between the languor and ennui of satisfaction and the misery and suffering of desire. He has no high cause; his noblest thought could be only a calculus of pleasures. Western man is a humanist; but his humanism is of a base, lowly type.

Fortunately, the ethic of Islam has not undergone such radical change. But the disease of Western man is spreading among Muslim youth eager to imitate their Western counterparts. The desire to modernize and progress being often unenlightened and overhasty, the Muslim imitates the West without realization of the underlying postulates. This process has reached large, but not yet alarming proportions. It must be arrested. Christian-Muslim cooperation faces a double task on two fronts, the

Christian and the Muslim. Both need it to express the futility of Western development, redirect the youth of the world to God and His law, and reactivate our God-bound conscience so as to become efficiently determinant of all our deeds, of life itself. In this task, the ethics of Islam is the great teacher which can help pull the Christian and the Muslim out of their predicaments. Islam never denied nature *per se*, with all its instincts and desires, nor did it ever tolerate any apotheosis of it. It even blessed it;²⁷ called privation the work of Satan;²⁸ and conceived of religious and ethical felicity as always containing two happinesses, that of earth and that of the Hereafter.²⁹ Its pursuit of earthly happiness was however to be always subject to the moral law, to be carried out in consciousness of the divine presence for the sake of God. This refined, enlightened, ethicalized and spiritualized the Muslim's quest in the past. Muslim-Christian cooperation would aim at reviving this ethic which is not unknown to Christianity, and thus to rehabilitate modern man morally with the creative and civilizing force of the two religions.

c. *The Problem of the Family.* In the West, developments in personal ethics adversely affected the family. Satisfaction of nature and instincts can only be personal, and personal relativism was indeed the outcome. The family is by nature built on altruism, on feelings of giving more than on those of taking. It cannot survive in an atmosphere where the moral ought rests ultimately on the material satisfaction of nature's instincts and interests. Such satisfaction being always personal, and hence relativist, its pursuit would necessarily become egotistic, and thus run counter to the foundations of family life.

Scepticism and the general repudiation of authority in the West have shaken tradition and its values. Urbanism and industrialism have uprooted millions of humans and landed them in cities where 'society' provides no support for upholding of traditional values now dependent upon personal conscience alone. Dogged pursuit of material gain pulled both parents away from the children, as it separated the young adults from the older ones, thus giving rise to generation gaps which are becoming

ever wider. Undisciplined by nature-transcending principles, pursuit of personal natural happiness conflicted with family values and in consequence, the institution of the family began to crumble. Women's liberation, the loosening of social conscience as regards adultery, birth control, abortion and divorce, the pressure on women to have careers of their own and the general denigration of motherhood, of in-laws, grandparents and relatives – all these undermined the foundations of the family and brought about the present disastrous state in which it stands in the West.

As it moves rapidly forward towards industrialization, the Muslim World is becoming infected with the same kind of disease. The first sign of decay is the break-up of the extended family. The extended family has been the guardian of family morals; the provider of the family's manpower needs in child care, in education, in leisure and recreation; its primary source of consolation in tragedy and distress, as well as its linkage with the past and future. The Muslim extended family is today in a state of crisis. Should it crumble, the storms of decay and degeneration blowing on us from the West may be impossible to resist.

Christian-Muslim cooperation should aim at arresting the disaster and freezing its march over the Muslim World. Islam's contribution to the cause of the family, namely, woman's innocence, the civility of the marriage contract, the hallowing respect for the elder, the sane divorce law, the buttressing of the extended family with inheritance laws, the far-reaching control of the Shari'ah and ever-presence of God – all these ought to be mobilized so as to save the Muslim family. And they should be presented to our Christian brothers and sisters that they may find in them help against the corrosive influences of modern times.

d. *The Problem of Race.* Romanticism and its implied relativism in ethics were the consequence of a failure of nerve on the part of the Enlightenment to reach and establish a rationally viable ideal of the universal community. Previously,

the Church had persistently taught such an ideal. The break-up of Church authority achieved by the Reformation let loose particularistic forces which grew, under Romanticism, into nationalist movements founded ultimately on race. It was racism that silenced Christian conscience when it condemned the slave trade, the wanton destruction of Amerindians, the conquest and exploitation of Asians and Africans and colonization of their own land, the opium war. It was racism that produced the Holocaust of Hitler (1889–1945), the persecution of the non-white citizens of America despite Lincoln and the Civil War. Unfortunately, for all of us, Muslims and Christians, racism is still very much the order of things in the world today and the source of most of its political ills. It is the ultimate ground for the decisions the developed countries make in their relations with the underdeveloped Third World.

How much does the world need the universalism of Christianity and Islam! How timely is their universalist call that all men are equal creatures before God, that all men issue from dust and will return to dust, that there is no distinction between them except in righteousness and virtue!¹⁰ Islam and Christianity have here a sublime role to play, and they are the only religions capable of playing it.¹¹

e. *The Problem of Materialism.* Modern man follows an exaggerated view of the importance of the material world. True, religion is sane and has never denied the value of material life. Some schools of Hinduism and Buddhism do; and Christianity and Islam have been falsely accused of doing so by their scorning the value of this world. Christianity and Islam are strongest in their denial of the material world when it seeks to determine human life and destiny. Both religions rightly assert: There is a higher order than the material – the spiritual; and it is to the spiritual that ultimate control belongs.

In the Christian West, exaggeration on both sides – the religionist and the lay – led to conflict and to the layman's breakaway of his material quest from spiritual control and his going to extremes in his attachment to and pursuit of the world.

With an empiricist philosophy to give him cover, a positivist ideology to encourage him, and a flowering natural science and technology to satisfy his every desire, his quest reached the moon. Blinded by his materialistic pursuits, he even thought matter was the first and last determinant of being and history. This disease, in mild or extremist form, has infected both Christendom and Islamdom.

The correct diagnosis of the disease does not lie in condemning the material world as such; nor in seeking to alienate man from his materialist pursuits. Such attempts are vain and will never succeed. The right prognosis is that which seeks to re-establish the link between man's material quest and the moral law. For spirituality is not the denial of that quest, but its subjection to the moral law. The problems of the rape of nature, of world pollution, of the dehumanization of man by machines, of the maldistribution of food, wealth and resources, all these are in final analysis cases of quests of material good uncontrolled by any moral principle. All these ills of the modern world derive from man's artificial separation of spirit from matter, from his prejudgement that the quest of spirit and quest of matter are irrelevant to each other. There is no solution except in their junction in the guidance of the material by the moral.

Christianity and Islam should rise to this modern challenge. The resources at their disposal to fight it are enormous. The problem has become so acute that materialism now produces revulsion in the mind of Western man, though he is unable to check its drive even in his own person. He is desperately groping for Indian and Chinese spirituality to relieve him of the existential nausea materialism causes him at home, office, factory, and in the public realm. Indian religiosity, however, will not satisfy. For any acquaintance with it beyond the superficial level reveals the condemnation of the world and life, the pessimism and despair on which it is built as foundation. All men are ontologically committed to some materialism; and, because of his past experience, Western man is pre-eminently so. Western man is ready to receive a fresh, new wisdom with which to order his life; but he will turn away from any exaggerated spiritualism

which reminds him of that false religiosity against which he revolted in the first place.

Islam, too, has been misinterpreted by the Sufis as life- and world-denying, as extolling poverty, the ascetic life, and withdrawal from public affairs. Even the great Qur'anic value of *sabr*, which means patient and determined perseverance in this world and life, was misinterpreted by the Sufis into its very opposite, namely, resignation, surrender and expectation of an eschatological solution to the problem at hand. The result was the lethargy of Muslims to take their fate into their own hands.

Islam and Christianity must combat the disease of materialism itself, as well as the interpretation of religion as a defeatist escape from the world. They must re-establish themselves in the minds of modern men and women as religions which seek man's material welfare and happiness and his spiritual well-being and felicity. They must convince modern men and women that if their own, personal material quest is not to sour and turn itself against them, it has to be refined, disciplined, guided and inspired by moral and spiritual values which only religion can give.

f. *Colonialism and National Competition.* The mad scramble for material benefit at home, undisciplined by any moral principle or value, led to the cut-throat, dog-eat-dog competition which debased and tore up the moral fibre of man. Although social welfare and economic control legislation has done much to alleviate the burden of the victims, human society still suffers. On the foreign front, the world has not recovered from two centuries of colonialism and exploitation in which the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America toiled for the benefit of Europe and the United States of America. Many areas in the world today still fall under the hateful colonial yoke of the West or its stooges. Palestine is a tragedy unique in the history of man's disrespect for man, of man's indulgence in persistently robbing his fellow man of his home and land, his livelihood and future, followed by Rhodesia, South Africa and the Muslim lands of the Soviet Union and India, of Thailand and the Philippines.

Many lands which succeeded in removing the yoke of direct

colonialist rule fell under the more subtle one of neo-colonialism. Their fall under the new yoke was assisted, if not actually engineered, by the colonial power which did everything to hinder the colony's political and economic growth in order to keep it forever dependent upon the colonizing country. The colonial masters were replaced by experts, advisers and agents of the international corporations which continued the former exploitation. Most pitiful of all is African and Asian pursuit of Westernization in language, education, in the arts and style of living which the colonized peoples, alienated by colonialism from their own heritage and culture, now pursue with greater avidity than in the days of colonialism.

In this century, colonialism contributed significantly to two world wars, and to countless smaller wars as well. Raw materials and markets, and the strategic points which facilitate their control, are the main bone of contention between the world powers. Nationalism, which is only a species of ethical relativism and unbridled materialism, must lead to national conflict. Finally, instead of being a force for genuine peace among the nations, the United Nations has for a quarter of a century been a manipulatable tool in the hands of the big powers. And now that the Third World nations have assumed a measure of the organization's control, voices in the big powers, notably the United States, are complaining that the United Nations has outgrown its usefulness.

Islam and Christianity are indeed relevant to the order of nations. Islam's contribution to international law and order is enormous. In some aspects even this century has not yet risen to its level of contribution. This relevance ought to be reactivated. For the world, in the atomic age, is doomed unless the moral law is brought to bear upon international strategy and politics; unless, as Islam directed, individuals as well as states could be brought to an effective international court of law and made accountable for their conduct. Muslim-Christian cooperation should therefore enhance the voice of religion and conscience in international affairs. That voice should cool off the victim of aggression until his claim is recognized; and it should reverberate

against the author of injustice until his aggression is stopped and redressed.

g. *Nihilism*. The persistence, deepening and aggravation of the aforementioned ills have produced the worst evil of all – nihilism. Under their tremendous pressure man's morale has been warped and his spirit broken. Everywhere, but especially in the West, he stands given to despair and suicide. He has become painfully aware of the overwhelming power of the social, political, economic and military machines surrounding him. He has forgotten that it is his very resignation and lethargy that are the real sources of power of these establishments; that they, like Abraham's idols, have no power other than that which he has invested in them. He stands alone without comforter, unaware that it was he who walked out on his relatives, friends and neighbours, in preference for the insularity and 'privacy' of the nuclear family, of urban dwelling and anonymity. He has lost the meaning of life, as everything around him has lost its glow through commercialization. Even procreation and death, the ultimate mysteries of existence, have lost their meaning and interest. Adultery, the pill and so-called 'sex education' robbed the former of its innocence and beauty; war-bred callousness, toleration and recurrence of violence, and individualistic self-estrangement of man from man dissolved the shock and pathos of the latter. Since World War II even the young, who are usually the fountain of youthful hope and idealism, are deflowered, disenchanted and brutalized by their 'experience' of life, whether in real life or through the mass media, the schoolroom or the street corner. Samuel Beckett's (1906–89) *Waiting for Godot* is not just a play. It is an empiricist's representation of human reality.

Christianity and Islam are *par excellence* religions of hope, of optimism and good cheer. God did not create man to be miserable, to suffer in abjectness and despair. Even to the chronic sufferer and victim, each of them counselled endurance and perseverance as it announced 'glad tidings', divine help and victory. How they allowed modern man to fall into despair will always remain a mystery. But the challenge has touched both

religions in the raw. That is why this conference has been called. That is why Christianity and Islam will emerge from it quickened, energized and re-invigorated.

Notes

1. The term 'Semitic' was invented by Old Testament scholars in the eighteenth century to denote languages (Arabic, Hebrew, Ethiopic, Syriac, Aramaic, etc.) which presented a striking familiarity to Arabic and Hebrew. They were inspired by Old Testament genealogy tracing descent of the peoples of the Fertile Crescent from Sam, son of Noah, and thus distinguishing them from other peoples of the world. This appellation was given *faute de mieux*; for there was no other name which these scholars could give to those peoples and their languages. Today, we know that all 'Semitic' languages are related to Arabic as daughters are to their mother; that Arabic contains all or most of the grammatical syntactical and literary forms of these languages. The 'Semitic' languages differ from Arabic by adoption of some local, and discarding through non-use of some older, vocabulary and forms, and liberalizing the grammatical strictures of Arabic. We also know today that the peoples who spoke the 'Semitic' languages were ethnically the same; that they lived in one geographic theatre; that they drew from a common fund of tradition and experience without which the parallelism of their legends and representations of themselves and their history would not be possible; that they, finally, shared one and the same culture as expressed in their literatures and arts, as well as the same religiosity as expressed in the sequel in this paper. None of them represented itself as 'Semite', not even the Hebrews. These did so only in modern times. The others, and they are the majority, better deserve to be called 'Arab' rather than 'Semite' – the questionable genealogical appellation – because the Arabian Peninsula was certainly their fountain and source, the repository of their mother-tongue, literary forms, common experience and wisdom, the conceiver of their relationship to the Deity expressed and preserved in their 'Semitic' languages, the mirrors of their consciousness and being. Being genealogical, the name 'Semite' is purely denotative. The name 'Arab', on the other hand, being cultural, is connotative and informative.

2. This is true despite the fact that native Mesopotamians regarded the inhabitants of the desert, but not themselves, as 'Aribi', 'Aribū' or 'Urbi', a distinction which survives to this day as is indicated by the terms *al-'Arab* and *al-A'rab*. See Rene Dussaud's *La Penetration des Arabes en Syrie avant l'Islam* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1955); P.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1956), pp. 30–48; James Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), pp. 265–301; M.A. Baraniq (ed.), *Muhammad Arabi* (Sayda: Al-Maktabah al-'Asriyyah, 1376 AH); Jawad Ali, *Tārīkh*

al-'Arab Qabla al-Islām (Baghdad: Maktabah al-Muthannā, 1370 AH); James A. Montgomery, *Arabia and the Bible* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1969).

3. For elaboration of this view, see I.R. al-Faruqi (ed.), *Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1975), 'The Ancient Near East', pp. 1–34.

4. 'And God implanted in every heaven its own pattern to follow' (Qur'ān, *Fussilat* 41: 12). 'He created everything and gave it its exact pattern ...' (*al-Furqān* 25: 2; 'Abasa 80: 19). 'Everything We created, We did so in accordance with a pattern ...' (*al-Qamar* 54: 49).

5. For a detailed elaboration of this view, see I.R. al-Faruqi, *On Arabism: Volume I, Unruh and Religion* (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1961), Introduction and Chapter 1.

6. 'Say, O People of the Book! Come now to a fair principle common to both of us, that we shall not worship anyone except God; that we shall never associate aught with Him; and that we shall not take one another for Lord beside God' (Qur'ān, *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 64).

7. 'Hold firm to the religion, as a *hanīf* would. This religion is the religion of nature, the religion built-in by God within all men. There is no alteration to the way God had disposed of this matter. His religion is the worthy one. But most men are ignorant of this fact' (Qur'ān, *al-Rūm* 30: 30). The Prophet said: 'Every man is born a Muslim; his parents make of him a Christian or a Jew. That is to say, every person is born with this *sensus numinis* by which he 'naturally' comes to recognition of the existence and unity of God and of His relevance to his own life. It is history, i.e., nurture, not nature, that differentiates him religiously from other men.

8. 'The seven heavens and the earth and all that therein stands, all praise God. Only you do not comprehend their praise' (Qur'ān, *al-Isrā'* 17: 44).

9. 'We sent no prophet before you (Muhammad) but that We revealed to him that there is no God but Me ... Those who ... distinguish between God and His prophets, who accept some and reject others, seeking thereby to differentiate between their revelations, are truly unbelievers ... But those who believe in God and His prophets and who do not discriminate between their revelations shall have their just reward' (Qur'ān, *al-Anbiyā'* 21: 25; *al-Nisā'* 4: 150–2).

10. 'We revealed the Torah, a light and a guidance. By its precepts, the prophets who submitted to God judged the Jews, as did the rabbis and the priests who learned the Book of God and were commissioned to witness thereunto' (Qur'ān, *al-Mā'idah* 5: 44).

11. 'Those who believed, the Jews, Christians and Sabaeans whoever believes in God, in the Day of Judgement and leads a life of virtue – have their reward with

their God. Neither do they fear nor do they have reason to grieve' (Qur'ān, *al-Baqarah* 2: 62). 'God taught Jesus the scripture and wisdom . . . and sent him a prophet to the sons of Israel' (*Āl 'Imrān* 3: 47). 'The Christians are upright, recite the revelations of God during the night hours and prostrate themselves in worship. They believe in God and in the Day of Judgement. They enjoy the good, forbid evil, and they compete in performance of good works. These are certainly righteous' (*Āl 'Imrān* 3: 113-14).

12. 'Say: We (the Muslims) believe in that which has been revealed to us as well as in that which has been revealed to you (People of the Book, i.e., Christians and Jews). Our God and your God is One and the same: It is to Him that we all submit' (Qur'ān, *al-Ankabūt* 29: 46).

13. 'Al-Taṣawwur al-Ilāhī lil-Islām', Report on Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's Paris Conference in *al-Fīṣṣat al-Islāmī al-Masīlī*, 8 Muharram, 1396 (9 January 1976), pp. 4-6.

14. Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, 1966), p. 663.

15. It is realized that these voices speak as individual scholars and laity, not as official voice of the Church.

16. In this connection, the works of Friar Edward H. Flannery (Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations, Seton Hall University) are examples of pro-Zionist Christian prejudice.

17. Consider the torrent of literature flooding the Christian in the last two decades, which is calculated to win sympathy for Zionism by diluting the Christian's traditional understanding of his religion and its history. The main contention is the Christian charge that the Jews are guilty of deicide. Absurd as it may seem, the Christians have held their present Jewish neighbours personally guilty of a deed their ancestors had committed twenty centuries ago. To remove the absurdity, all they need to do is to assert the principle of personal responsibility for deeds committed by the person, to deny vicarious guilt. But they choose, instead, to deny what they for twenty centuries have regarded as Christian truth, namely, that the Jews were responsible for the crucifixion, and to pass the blame to the Romans, or to mankind as a whole. See S.J. Gerard Sloyan, *The Trial of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973); and Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1961).

18. Consider, for example, the writings of Protestant James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (New York: Atheneum, 1969) and A. Roy Eckhardt, *Elder and Younger Brothers: The Encounter of Jews and Christians* (New York: Schocken Books, 1973) and of Catholic John M. Oesterreicher, whose recently founded Institute of Judeo-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University is dedicated to this task. Christian concern for their relations with the Jews is understandable, indeed,

laudable. The Muslim rejoices at every reconciliation. But he may justly oppose any reconciliation which in any way helps the Zionist state, a state which faces him every morning with Phantoms and napalm, seizure of Arab land, building of new settler fortresses, and defacement of the Arab character of Palestine.

19. In his *The Beginning of the Promise* (London: SPCK, 1960), Stanley Brice Frost, an Old Testament theologian, argued that 'since Laban and Jacob worked the frontier to their grazing grounds at Galed, this (the Israelites held) had clearly settled the Syrian-Israelite border for all time' and added a word of advice to modern-day Syrians and Israelis. 'We could only wish', he wrote, 'that modern Syrians and Israelis could agree on this same point' (p. 52). 'The state of Israel', wrote John M. Oesterreicher, 'is the visible expression of the God-willed permanence of the Jewish people. As is Judaism, so is the State of Israel, a banner of God's fidelity. . . . The promise of the Land antedates the existence of the people. The Christian must not ignore that the foundations of the State are thus even deeper than an act of the world community and a decision of the settlers of the Land. . . . When will Christians come to say the right word about Eretz Yisrael? (*The Rediscovery of Judaism*, South Orange, N.H.: Institute of Judeo-Christian Studies of Seton Hall University, pp. 37-8).

20. Practically every Christian theologian who addressed himself to the question is ambiguous on the matter of continued elect status of the Jews, in loyalty to the words of Paul (*Romans*, Chapters 9-11) regarding them. With the emergence of Israel as a nation in 1948 and the enormous pressures Zionism has exerted on Western intellectuals of all types, one arm of the antinomy, namely, the replacement of Israel by the Church, seems to be slowly going into eclipse and the eternal election of Israel seems to gain ground. Consider in this light Jakub Jocz's *A Theology of Election: Israel and the Church* (London: SPCK, 1958) where the author, a convert from Judaism, argued for 'the permanent significance of the existence of the Jewish people as a people that cannot escape the marks of election' (front cover). See also Otto Piper et al., *The Church Meets Judaism* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966). Clemens Thoma wrote of the Conciliar Statement that it 'confirms the biblical profession that God's calling and gracious gift are irrevocable . . . that the Jewish people is, therefore, still God's special possession . . . and that the particular distinction of Christians, as God's people, is to be joint heirs, joint members, joint partners with the Jews' (*Kirche aus Juden und Heiden*, Vienna: Herder, 1970, p. 16, quoted in John M. Oesterreicher, *The Rediscovery of Judaism*, p. 18).

21. Consider, for example, the works of Elie Wiesel (a Jewish dramatist and playwright), Emil Fackenheim (a Jewish philosopher), J. Coert Rylaarsdam (a Protestant Old Testament theologian) and John M. Oesterreicher and Edward Flannery (Catholic theologians who made their speciality Jewish-Christian relations).

22. For an analysis of societism in Christian ethics, see I.R. al-Faruqi, *Christian Ethics: A Historical and Systematic Analysis of Its Dominant Ideas* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1967), p. 248 ff.

23. The sad history of this interpretation may be read in the works of Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image and Islam, Europe and Empire* (both published by the University Press at Edinburgh, 1960 [revised edition, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1993] and 1966 respectively). See also A.L. Tibawi, 'English-Speaking Orientalists: A Critique of Their Approach to Islam and Arab Nationalism', *The Muslim World*, Vol. LIII, Nos. 3-4 (1963), pp. 185-204, 298-313.

24. This position has been elaborated in a thousand and one treatises, and is classical to Islam and Islamic culture. For example, see Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi's *Jāmi' Bayān al-'Ilm wa Fadlihi* and Franz Rosenthal's *Knowledge Triumphant* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973). A brief selection of Qur'anic verses extolling reason and enjoining the quest of rational knowledge to Muslims can be found in I.R. al-Faruqi's 'Islam' in W.T. Chan et al., *The Great Asian Religions* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1969), pp. 319-20.

25. See this author's comparative analysis, 'The Problem of the Metaphysical Status of Values in the Western and Islamic Traditions', *Studia Islamica*, XXVIII, pp. 29-62.

26. See this author's analysis of Western man in 'On the Significance of Niebuhr's Ideas of Society', *Canadian Journal of Theology*, Vol. VII, No. 2 (1961), pp. 99-107.

27. Qur'ān, al-A'raf 7: 32.

28. Qur'ān, al-Baqarah 2: 268.

29. Qur'ān, al-Baqarah 2: 201; al-A'raf 7: 156; al-Nahl 16: 41, 122.

30. 'O men, We created you all from a single male and female. We constituted you into nations and tribes that you may enrich and cooperate with one another. Noblest among you in God's eyes is the most virtuous' (Qur'ān, al-Hujurat 49: 13). At his farewell pilgrimage, the Prophet Muḥammad, said: 'All men issue from Adam and Adam issues from dust. No Arab is superior to any non-Arab unless it be in righteousness and virtue.' 'God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Timothy 2: 4). This author has presented the ethical message of Christianity as a repudiation of Jewish particularism, in his *Christian Ethics*, Chapters II, III, pp. 75-136.

31. Excellent statements of the potential of Christianity for such a role may be found in the works of Paul VI, then Cardinal G.B. Montini, *The Mind of Paul VI on the Church and the World* (Milwaukee: Bruce Pub. Co., 1964); *The Christian in the Material World* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1964) and *Dialogues: Reflections on God and Man* (New York: Trident Press, 1965).

CHAPTER EIGHT

Islam and Christianity: Diatribes or Dialogue

Precis

The Qur'ān set the doctrinal basis of Muslim-Christian relations which have varied in the past from very poor to excellent. The contemporary Christian missionaries fail to realize the strength of Jesus' influence upon the Muslims. Christian missionaries have been influenced by many un-Christian ideas. Thus Western Christian missions to Muslims were not a mission of Jesus but only of a Western understanding of Jesus. The mission work has been a failure in almost every respect and should be called off.

Isolation of the two faiths is impossible. Exclusivism, so often a mark of religion, is as bad as proselytism. Both religions assert that they have *the* truth, which is logically impossible. Christianity and Islam must be interested in each other's claims by means of dialogue, which is the altruistic extension of both religions. Only through dialogue will the two religions ever be united in the religion of God (may He be Glorified and Exalted) and truth. Conversion to *the* truth is the aim of dialogue. This dialogue will enable understanding of values and sets of meanings in both religions.

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The dialogue must follow these ground rules: (1) no religious pronouncement is beyond the reach of criticism, (2) internal coherence must exist, (3) proper historical perspective must be maintained, (4) correspondence with reality must exist, (5) freedom from absolutized scriptural figurization, and (6) dialogue should be carried on in areas where there is a greater possibility of success, e.g., the field of ethical duties.

Three themes for dialogue are discernible:

1. Contemporary Muslims and Christians are life-affirming in regard to God's creation and hold that man has a unique task to perfect this world. The theological usefulness of the notion of original, hereditary, collective, and vicarious sin are gone. Sin is personal and based on free-will; it is primarily located in misperception and its solution is in education rather than forgiveness. Sin is not necessary nor is it predominant in human affairs. For modern Muslims and Christians the way out of the predicament of sin is in human rather than divine hands. Salvation is achieved by continuous education and each person must educate himself.

2. An awareness of the imperative of doing the will of God exists. Former notions of justification are insufficient. Justification is a continuous process which does not consist of confession to God, but of recognition of real values and the following of the long, hard road in reaching these values. Knowledge is virtue. Neither great sin nor serious repentance is typical of most people, hence the confession of faith has but mediocre value. Justification is a psychic release which may enable a man with determination to reach his goal, but is not a value in itself.

3. Every man has an equal imperative to fulfil his moral mission which is yet unfulfilled on a world-wide basis. Redemption is only being accomplished by man rather than already having taken place. Justification and redemption are but a prelude to the perception and pursuit of value (God's will). This is possible to all people and has to take place all the time.

These reconstructions of religious thought are compatible with both Islam and Christianity but it is unlikely that the latter will

be willing to accept these tenets. Roman Catholics through Vatican II have made too few advances in that respect and are still too condescending toward Muslims. Protestants, who may be represented by Paul Tillich (1886-1965), also consider the Christian figurization of God in Jesus as normative which prevents fruitful dialogue with Muslims. Protestant acceptance of the above ground rules could lead to useful dialogue.

This is not the place to review the history of Christian-Muslim relations. This history may now be read in the erudite works of Norman Daniel.¹ The reading is sad and agonizing. The conclusion which may be safely drawn from this history is that Christianity's involvement with the Muslim world was so full of misunderstanding, prejudice, and hostility that it has warped the Western Christian's will and consciousness. 'Would to God Christianity had never met Islam!' will reverberate in the mind of any student patient enough to peruse that history.² On the other side, Muslim-Christian relations have been determined by the Qur'ān.³ Doctrinally, therefore, these relations have seen no change. Throughout their history, and despite the political hostilities, the Muslims revered Jesus as a great prophet and his faith as divine religion. As for the Christians, the Muslims argued with them in the manner of the Qur'ān. But when it came to political action, they gave them the benefit of the doubt as to whether they followed the Christianity of Jesus or of the Church. Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and 'Umar's wager for a Christian victory over the Zoroastrians, the Makkan Muslims' choice of, welcome and protection by Christian Abyssinia and Muḥammad's personal waiting upon the Christian Abyssinian delegates to Madinah, the Prophet's covenant with the Christians of Najrān, 'Umar's covenant with the Archbishop of Jerusalem and his refusal to hold prayer on the premises of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre lest later Muslims might claim the place, the total cooperation of the Umawis and 'Abbāsids with their Christian subjects, and of the Umawis of Cordova

with Christians who were not their subjects – all these are landmarks in a record of cooperation and mutual esteem hardly paralleled in any other history. Some persecution, some conversion under influences of all sorts, some aggression, some doctrinal attacks going beyond the limits defined by the Qur'ān, there were, without a doubt. The Muslims in all places and times were not all angels! But such were scattered cases whose value falls to the ground when compared with the overwhelming spread of history which has remained true to this Qur'ānic position.

The Present Problem

Perhaps nothing is more anachronistic – indeed absurd – than the spectacle of the Western Christian missionary preaching to Muslims the Western figurization of the religion of Jesus. The absurdity is twofold. First, the West, whence the missionary comes and which sustains him in his effort, has for decades stopped finding meaning in that figurization which is the content of mission. Indeed, in the missionary himself, that figurization determines but one little portion of his consciousness, the remainder falling under the same corroding secularism, materialism and sceptical empiricism so common in Western thought and culture. Second, the missionary preaches this figurization to Muslims who, in North Africa and the Near East, were thrice Christians. They were Christians in the sense of preparing, through the spiritualization and interiorization of the Semitic religion, for the advent of Jesus. It was their consciousness and spirit which served God as human substrate and historical circumstance for that advent. Naturally, they were the first to 'acknowledge' Jesus and to believe in him as crystallization of a reality which is themselves. They were Christians in the second sense of the Western figurization of Christianity when, having fallen under the dominion of Byzantium, they flirted with that figurization and in fact adopted all its doctrinal elements regardless of whether or not they officially joined the churches of Western Christianity. After living with this figurization a while,

they welcomed and embraced Islam. But they remained, even as Muslims, Christians in the sense of holding the realization of the ethic of Jesus as the *conditio sine qua non* of Islamicity and of realizing a fair part of the Jesus-ethic in their personal lives. The comedy in evidence today is that the missionary is utterly unaware of this long experience of the Muslim with Jesus Christ.

This Western missionary, whether *monastes* or other, has associated himself with, and often played the role of colonial governor, trader, settler, military, physician and educator. In the last two decades, after the Muslim countries achieved independence, he found for himself the role of development expert. Expertise in poultry-breeding, neurological surgery or industrial management, and the crying need of the Muslim's as yet underdeveloped country were callously taken as God-sent occasions to evangelize, thus stirring within the Muslim a sense of being exploited and producing still more bitterness. Besides, such an expert-missionary is often sponsored by, if not the direct employee of, the aiding agency of the Western government; and a fair harmonization of his tactics and purposes with those of that government were safely presupposed. The Western World knows of no Christian who, moved by the Sermon on the Mount, came to live among Muslims as a native, who made their burden his burden, their hopes and yearnings his hopes and yearnings. Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), the idol of the modern West in Christian self-giving to the natives of Africa, was as un-Christian as to condemn all the Africans' search for liberty;⁴ indeed publicly to request President Eisenhower to prevent a United Nations debate on Algeria. The Africans ought to be helped and their suffering relieved, this saint of the twentieth century commanded his fellow Christian whites – but as our colonial subjects! Moreover, where it dissociated itself from imperialism and was purely religious, Western Christian mission to the Muslim World was never a mission of Jesus, but a mission of the Western figurization of Christianity arrogantly asserted in words, hardly ever exemplified in deeds. Modern Christendom has produced a Mrs. Vester who really gave and, fortunately, is still giving of her

life to the orphans of Jerusalem.⁵ There probably were and still are other isolated individuals of this calibre. Nonetheless, the persistent effort needed to establish an ethically respectable relation with Muslim society has been neglected. Since it has brought hardly any significant conversions and aggravated the alienation of the two world communities, and since the Muslims, as well as Muslim World Christians, regard it as pouring ideological salt into political wounds inflicted by the Crusades and a century of colonization, the mission chapter of Christian history, as we have so far known it, had better be closed, the hunt called off, the missionaries withdrawn and the mission-arm of the Catholic Church and of the World Council of Churches liquidated.

To say all this is not to advocate isolation. In fact, isolation is impossible. The world is simply too small, and our lives are utterly interdependent. Not only our survival, but even our well-being and happiness depend on our cooperation. Mere diplomatic courtesy or casual coalescence of political interests will not suffice. No genuine and effective cooperation can proceed without mutual esteem and respect, without agreement on purposes, final objectives and standards. If it is to last through the generations and withstand the excruciating travails that it must and will face in the construction of a viable world-ecumene, cooperation must be firmly based on a communion of faith in ultimate principles, on communion in religion.

There is yet a more important and logically prior consideration why isolation is neither possible nor desirable. In Islam as well as in Christianity, and probably in all other religions, the man of religion does not, in his religious claim, assert a tentative hypothesis, nor a truth among other truths, or a version of the truth among other possible versions, but the truth. This is so much part of religious experience and of the claim resting on such experience that to deny it is to caricature the religion as a whole. Neither Islam nor Christianity can or will ever give it up. Certainly this is exclusivism; but the truth is exclusive. It cannot run counter to the laws of identity, of contradiction, of the excluded middle. Unlike science which works with probabilities,

religion works with certainties. Religious diversity is not merely a religious problem. If the religion in question lays claim to *the* truth, contrary or diverse claims are intellectual problems which cannot be ignored. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, the exclusivist claim is as much *de jure* as it is *de facto*.

In our day and age, exclusivism has a bad smell. Having worked with probabilities for three hundred years, as scientists or the audience of scientists, and – as philosophers or the audience of philosophers – with sceptical notions of the truth for over half a century, we contract our noses whenever an exclusive claim to the truth is made. As men of religion, I hope we all have the strength of our convictions, and feel neither offended nor shamed by what our faiths claim. On the other hand, there is something shameful about exclusivism, just as there is about mission. That is to lay one's claim with authority, to refuse to listen to or silence criticism, and to hold tenaciously to one's claim in face of evidence to the contrary. We regard the exclusivist in science as stupid, even insane, for running in the face of evidence. Such opprobrium equally belongs to the man of religion guilty of the same offence against the truth. Resistance to evidence, however, is not a necessary quality of religion, nor of the man of religion. It falls within the realm of ethics of knowledge. True, religious theses are not as easily demonstrable as those of science; and the man of religion appears often to flout the evidence when it would be more just to say that he is not yet convinced thereby. But where the evidence is significant or conclusive, to flout it is a deficiency of the man. Though its object is religious or moral, exclusivism is epistemological and hence not subject to moral considerations. On the other hand, although its object is epistemological, fanaticism is moral.

Islam and Christianity cannot therefore be impervious to each other's claims; for just as it is irrefutably true that each lays claim to *the* truth and does so candidly, it is irrefutably true that the truth is one, that unless the standpoint is one of scepticism, of two diverse claims to *the* truth, one or both must be false! In the awareness that the standpoint of religion is that of a claim to *the* truth, none but the most egotistic tribalism or cynicism would

sit content with its grasp of *the* truth while diverse claims to *the* one and the same truth are being made just as candidly by others. The man of religion, however, is moral; and in Christianity and Islam, he is so *par excellence*. He must therefore go out into the world, teach *the* truth which his religious experience has taught him and in the process refute the contrary claims. In Islam as well as in Christianity, the man of religion is not a tribalist nor a cynic; and his personal relation to other men, if not the fate itself of other men, weighs heavily in the outcome of his own fate. Hence, both the Muslim and the Christian are intellectually and morally bound to concern themselves with the religious views of each other, indeed of all other men. To concern oneself with the convictions of another man is to understand and to learn these convictions, to analyze and criticize them and to share with their adherents one's own knowledge of the truth. If this is mission, then Islam and Christianity must missionize to the ends of the earth. I realize the equivocation of the term, and I suggest that the word 'mission' itself be dropped from our vocabulary and the term 'dialogue' be used to express the man of religion's concern for men's convictions.

'Dialogue' then is a dimension of human consciousness (as long as that consciousness is not sceptical), a category of the ethical sense (as long as that sense is not cynical). It is the altruistic arm of Islam and of Christianity, their reach beyond themselves. Dialogue is education at its widest and noblest. It is the fulfilment of the command of reality to become known, to be compared and contrasted with other claims, to be acquiesced in if true, amended if inadequate, and rejected if false. Dialogue is the removal of all barriers between men for a free intercourse of ideas where the categorical imperative is to let the sounder claim to the truth win. Dialogue disciplines our consciousness to recognize the truth inherent in realities and figurizations of realities beyond our usual ken and reach. If we are not fanatics, the consequence cannot be anything but enrichment to all concerned. Dialogue, in short, is the only kind of inter-human relationship worthy of man! Vouching for Islam and, unless my

reading of Christianity has completely deceived me, for Christianity as well, dialogue is of the essence of the two faiths, the theatre of their eventual unity as the religion of God, the religion of truth.⁶

We must say it boldly that the end of dialogue is conversion; not conversion to my, your or his religion, culture, mores or political regime, but to *the* truth. The conversion that is hateful to Islam or to Christianity is a conversion forced, bought or cheated out of its unconscious subject. Conversion as conviction of the truth is not only legitimate but obligatory – indeed, the only alternative consistent with sanity, seriousness and dignity. Moreover, the mutual understanding between Islam and Christianity which we yearn for is not merely the conceptual, descriptive knowledge of Islamic texts and manuscripts achieved by the *Orientalistik* discipline, nor of the Christian tradition achieved by the Muslim and older discipline of '*Al-Milal wa al-Nihāl*' where the elements constitutive of Christianity are simply listed as in a series. It is primarily an understanding of the religion in the sense of faith and ethos, of apprehending the moving appeal of its categories and values, of their determining power. Religious facts may be studied scientifically like any specimens of geology. But to understand them religiously is to apprehend them as life-facts whose content is this power to move, to stir and to disturb, to command and to determine. But to apprehend this power is to be determined by it, and to do so is precisely to attain religious conviction – in short, conversion, however limited or temporary. To win all mankind to *the* truth is the highest and noblest ideal man has ever entertained. That history has known many travesties of this ideal, that man has inflicted tremendous sufferings upon his fellow men in the pursuit of it are arguments against man, not against the ideal. They are the reasons why dialogue must have rules. Dialogue according to rule is the only alternative becoming of man in an age where isolation – were it ever possible – implies being by-passed by history, and non-cooperation spells general disaster. Granted, the rules must be critical and their presuppositions the fewest and simplest.

Methodology of Dialogue

Granted then that dialogue is necessary and desirable, that its final effect should be the establishment of truth and its serious, free, candid and conscious acceptance by all men, we may now move on to the specific principles of methodology which guarantee its meaningfulness and guard against its degeneration into propaganda, brainwashing or soul-purchasing. These are the following:

1. No communication of any sort may be made *ex cathedra*, beyond critique. No man may speak with silencing authority. As for God, He may have spoken with silencing authority when man was an infant, and infant man may have accepted and submitted. To mature man, however, His command is not whimsical and peremptory. He argues for, explains and justifies His command, and is not offended if man asks for such justification. Divine revelation is authoritative, but not authoritarian; for God knows that the fulfilment of His command which issues from rational conviction of its intrinsic worth is superior to that which is blind. Fully aware of his moral freedom, modern man cannot be subjected; nor can he subject himself to any being without cause; nor can such cause be incomprehensible, irrational, esoteric or secret.⁷

2. No communication may violate the laws of internal coherence mentioned earlier. Paradox is legitimate only when it is not final, and the principle overarching thesis and antithesis is given. Otherwise, discourse will issue in unintelligible riddles.

3. No communication may violate the laws of external coherence; that is to say, man's religious history. The past may not be regarded as unknowable, and historiography assumed to stand on a par with either poetry or fiction. Historical reality is discoverable by empirical evidence, and it is man's duty and greatness to press ever forward toward the genuine understanding and reconstruction of his actual past. The limits of evidence are the only limits of historical knowledge.

4. No communication may violate the law of correspondence with reality, but should be open to corroboration or

refutation by reality. If the laws of nature are not today what they were before Albert Einstein (1879-1955) or Copernicus (1473-1543), it is not because there are no laws to nature, nor because reality is unknowable, but because there is a knowable reality which corroborates the new insights. The physic, ethical and religious sensitivities of the people, of the age, are part of this reality; and man's knowledge of them is most relevant for the Muslim-Christian dialogue we are about to begin.

5. Dialogue presupposes an attitude of freedom *vis-à-vis* the canonical figurization. Jesus is a point at which the Christian has contact with God. Through him, God has sent down a revelation. Just as this revelation had to have its carrier in Jesus, it had to have a space-time circumstance in the historical development of Israel. Equally, Muhammad, the Prophet, is a point at which the Muslim has contact with God Who sent a revelation through him. Muhammad was the carrier of that revelation, and Arab consciousness and history provided the space-time circumstance for its advent. Once the advent of these revelations was complete, and men began to put their faith there in numbers and confronted new problems calling for new solutions, there arose the need to put the revelation in concepts for the ready use of the understanding, in percepts for that of the intuitive faculties, and in legal notions and provisions for the guidance of behaviour. The revelations were 'figurized'. Simultaneously, as is natural in such cases, different minds created different figurizations because they had different perceptions of the same reality. This latter pluralism is not a variety of the object of faith, the content revealed *an sich*, but of that object or content *in percipi*, i.e., as it became the object of a perception that is intellectual, discursive, intuitive and emotional all at once. Within each religion, the object of faith which is also the content of the revelation was, in itself, all one and the same. Although the figurizations of the revelation were many, that of which they were the figurization was one. Jesus is one; the God who sent him, and the divine revelation with which he was sent, each and every one of these was one, not many. When, as objects of human knowledge, they were conceptualized and perceptualized, they became many.

The same is of course true in the case of the figurization of Islam.

The pluralistic variety of men, of their endowments and talents, their needs and aspirations, and the peculiarities of their varying environments and historical circumstances produced a great array of figurizations in both religions. Undoubtedly, some of them were, some others were not, and still others were more or less inspired. There were differences in the accuracy of figurization, in the adequacy of conceptualization and perceptualization, and outrightly in the truthfulness and veracity of the representation. That is all too natural. Disputation and contention arose and lasted for many centuries; they continue to our present day. In the case of Christianity, it became evident that one of the figurizations surpassed in the mind of the majority all other figurizations. It must then be, the community concluded, an identical copy of the content revealed. Since this content is holy and is the truth, the thinkers of the community reasoned, all other figurizations are 'heresies' inasmuch as any departure from the Holy is anathema, and any variance from the Truth is falsehood. Slowly but surely, the 'other' figurizations were suppressed, and the chosen figurization stood as 'the dogma', 'the catholic Truth'. In the case of Islam, the general religious and ethical principles revealed in the Qur'ān were subjected to varying interpretations, and a large array of schools produced differing figurizations of law and ethics. As in the case of Jesus, the life of the Prophet was the subject of numerous figurizations. In order to bolster its authority and add to its faith in its own genuineness, each school projected its own thought onto his own person. Consensus finally eliminated the radical figurizations and preserved those which, in the judgement of the community, contained all the essentials. Later Muslims sanctified this figurization of the fathers, solemnly closed the gates of any creative interpretation however orthodox, and practically, though not theoretically, heretized every departure from what they had made canonical.

Being human conceptualizations and perceptualizations of reality, the figurizations of Islam and Christianity are necessarily tinged with the particularism of space-time. It is quite possible,

therefore, that some later generation might find some aspect of the holy content in the old figurization dimmed by time or distance; that the said content might need to be rediscovered therein; that some other generation might find new figurizational items which express to them that content or some part thereof more vividly. Certainly this is what happened in the Reformation, which brought in its wake revivification of many an aspect of the divine revelation of Jesus and released new as well as dormant energies in the service of the holy. This is also what happened in the Taymiyan (fourteenth century) and Wahhābī (eighteenth century) reforms in Islam.

Would such a re-presentation or rediscovery necessitate the Christian's and the Muslim's going out, as it were, of their own figurization, out of their 'catholic' truths? Not *simpliciter*. For there is no *a priori* or wholesale condemnation of any figurization. But we should never forget that, as a piece of human work, every figurization is capable of growing dim in its conveyance of the holy, not because the holy has changed, but because man changes perspectives. Truth, goodness and value, God and the divine will, for man as such are always the same. But His will in the change and flux of individual situations, of the vicissitudes of history – and that is precisely what the figurization had been relational to – must be changing in order that the divine will for man be always the same. To question the figurization is identically to ask the popular question: What is God's will in the context of our generation, of our historical situation, indeed, in the context of our personal individuation? The dimness of the figurization must be removed at all costs; its meanings must be rediscovered and its relevance recaptured.

There are those who argue that the figurization can and should never be transcended. Some of these do not recognize the humanity of the figurization. Others insist that piety and morality are rediscoverable only in the figurization itself. To seek the ever-new relevance of the divine imperative is for them to relate the figurization of the fathers to the new situations of human life and existence. That that is not a barren alternative is proved for them by numerous movements within the Christian tradition,

and by a number of juristic interpretations of the Shari'ah, in the Islamic tradition. Whether or not the present needs can be met by such means cannot be decided beforehand, and must be answered only after the needs themselves have been elaborated and the relating attempted. We can say at this stage, however, that a considerable degree of freedom *vis-à-vis* the figurization is necessary to ensure the greatest possible tolerance for the issues of the present to voice their claim.

6. In the circumstances in which Muslims and Christians find themselves today, primacy belongs to the ethical questions, not the theological. When one compares the canonical figurization of Christianity with that of Islam, one is struck by the wide disparateness of the two traditions. While Christianity regards the Bible as endowed with supreme authority, especially as it is interpreted with 'right reason' – that is to say, in loyalty to the central tenets of the figurization according to the Protestant school, or in loyalty to the tradition of the Church as understood by its present authorities, according to the Catholic – Islam regards the Bible as a record of the divine word but a record with which the human hand had tampered, with holy as well as unholy designs. Secondly, while Christianity regards God as man's fellow, a person so moved by man's failure that He goes to the length of sacrifice for his redemption, Islam regards God primarily as the Just Being whose absolute justice – with all the reward and doom for man that it enjoins – is not only sufficient mercy, but the only mercy coherent with divine nature. Whereas the God of Christianity *acts* in man's salvation, the God of Islam *commands* him to do that which brings that salvation about. Thirdly, while Christianity regards Jesus as the second person of a triune God, Islam regards him as God's human prophet and messenger. Fourthly, while Christianity regards space-time and history as hopelessly incapable of embodying God's kingdom, Islam regards God's kingdom as truly realizable – indeed as meaningful at all – only within the contexts of space-time and history. Fifthly, while Christianity regards the Church as the body of Christ endowed with ontic significance for ever and ever, Islam regards the community of faith as an instrument mobilized for

the realization of the divine pattern in the world, an instrument whose total value is dependent upon its fulfilment or otherwise of that task.

This list is far from complete. But it does show that the pursuit of dialogue on the level of theological doctrine is marred by such radical differences that no progress may be here expected without preliminary work in other areas. Since it is at any rate impossible for this generation of Muslims and Christians to confront one another regarding all facets of their ideologies at once, a choice of area for a meagre start such as this is imperative. Priority certainly belongs to those aspects which are directly concerned with our lives as we live them in a world that has grown very small and is growing smaller still. The Muslim-Christian dialogue should seek at first to establish a mutual understanding, if not a community of conviction, of the Muslim and Christian answers to the fundamental ethical question, What ought I to do? If Muslims and Christians may not reach ready appreciation of each other's ideas or figurizations of divine nature, they may yet attempt to do the will of that nature, which they both hold to be one. To seek 'God's way', i.e., to understand, to know, to grasp its relevance for every occasion, to anticipate its judgement of every moral deed – that is the prerequisite whose satisfaction may put the parties to the dialogue closer to mutual self-understanding. Even if theories of God's nature, of His revelation, of His kingdom, and of His plans for man's destiny were to be regarded as objects of faith beyond critique, certainly the ethical duties of man are subject to a rational approach. Neither Christianity nor Islam precludes a critical investigation of the ethical issues confronting modern man in the world. The proximity of these issues to his life, his direct awareness of them as affecting his own life as well as that of mankind give immediacy to the investigation, and they assign the prerogatives of competence and jurisdiction to his personal and communal judgement in the matter. The relevance of the issues involved to world problems pressing him for an answer furnishes the investigation with a ready testing ground.

Moreover, ethical perceptions are different from the percep-

tions of theoretical consciousness where to miss is to perceive unreality. Difference in ethical perception is that of the brother who does not see as much, as far or as deep as the other. This is a situation which calls for the involved midwifery of ethical perception. Here, there is no question of error and falsehood, as every perception is one of value and difference consists in perceiving more or less of the same. Neither is the question one of an acquiescent profession of a propositional fact. It is rather one of determination of the perceiving subject by the value that is beheld; and for such perception to be itself, it must be the perception of the man, just as for his realization of the will of God to be itself, i.e., moral, that realization has to be his own free and deliberate act. On the purely theological level, when the impulse to make others heretical is at work, tolerance can mean either contemptuous condescension, conversion, or compromise with the truth. In ethical perception, on the other hand, disagreement is never banished or excommunicated; and hereticism defeats its own purpose. Tolerance and midwifery – which are precisely what our small world needs – are the only answer. Their efforts are in the long run always successful; and, at any rate, they are in the Muslim's opinion the better as well as the 'Christian' view.

Themes for Dialogue

Looking upon the contemporary ethical reality of Muslims and Christians, three dominant facts are discernible:

Firstly, the modern Muslim and Christian regard themselves as standing in a state of innocence. Whatever their past ideas and attitudes may have been, both of them agree that man's individuation is good, that his life of person and in society is good, that nature and cosmos are good. Fortunately, modern Christian theologians too have been rejoicing in their rediscovery of God's judgement of creation 'that it was good'.⁸ The ideological import of this rediscovery is tremendous. Man has rehabilitated himself in creation. He has found his place in it and re-presented his destiny to himself as one of engagement in its web of history. He is

in God's image, the only creature with consciousness and spirit, unto whom the command of God has come, and upon whom the will of God on earth depends for realization as that will is, in itself, a will to a morally-perfected world. Certainly, God could have created the world already perfect, or necessarily-perfectible by the workings of natural law. But He created this world, 'where rust and moth consume and where thieves break through and steal',⁹ i.e., a world where His will, or value, is not yet realized, that in the free realization of it by man, the moral values may be realized which could not be realized otherwise. Hence, this world is good, despite its imperfection; and man occupies therein the especially significant – indeed cosmic – station of the bridge through which the ethical elements of divine will enter the realm of creation. It is not surprising that a rediscovery of such momentum causes a great deal of joy, a feeling of self-confidence in the great task ahead. Gone are the sordid obsessions with the innate depravity, the intrinsic futility, the necessary fallenness and cynical vacuity of man and of the world. Modern man affirms his life and his world. Recognizing the imperativeness as well as the moving appeal of God's command, he accepts his destiny joyfully and presses forth upright into the thick of space-time where he is to make that will real and actual.

Secondly, the modern Muslim and Christian are acutely aware of the necessity and importance of recognizing God's will, of recognizing His command. This acknowledgement is the substance, the content or 'meat' of their acknowledgement of God. 'Recognition of God's command', 'ethical perception' and 'the act of faith' are mutually convertible and equivalent terms. Such acknowledgement is indubitably the first condition; for it is absurd to seek to realize the divine will in the world without a prior acknowledgement of its content, just as it is absurd to seek to realize what ought to be done without the prior recognition of what is valuable. How is one to recognize that which ought to be done in any given situation – which must be one among a number of possible alternatives – without the standard or norm with which the realizability in the alternatives of that which ought to be can be measured and ascertained? Indeed, if an axiology-free

programme of action could ever be envisaged, the agent thereof would not be a moral subject, but an automaton of duties. To be moral at all, the act must imply a free choice; and this is a choice in which consciousness of the value, or of its *matériel* as the spatio-temporal concretization thereof, plays the crucial part. All this notwithstanding, and however absolutely indispensable and necessary the acknowledgement of God's command and will may be, it is only a condition, a *conditio sine qua non* to be sure, but still a condition. Philosophically stated, this principle is that of the priority of the study of values to duties, of axiology to deontology. The act of faith, of acknowledgement, recognition and acquiescence, is the first condition of piety, of virtue and felicity. But woe to man if he mistakes the condition of a thing for the thing itself! The act of faith neither justifies nor makes just. It is only an entrance ticket into the realm of ethical striving and doing. It does no more than let us into the realm of the moral life. There, to realize the divine imperative in the value-short world, to transfigure and to fill it with value, is man's prerogative as well as duty.

Thirdly, the modern Muslim or Christian recognizes that the moral vocation or mission of man in this world has yet to be fulfilled, and by him; that the measure of his fulfilment thereof is the sole measure of his ethical worth; that in respect to this mission or vocation all men start out in this world with a *carte blanche* on which nothing is entered except what each individual earns with his own doing or not-doing. In the discharge of his mission in space-time, no man is privileged and every man is an equal conscript. For the command of the one God is also one, for all men without discrimination or election; and His justice is absolute.¹⁰

Dialectic of the Themes with the Figurizations

A. Modern Man and the State of Innocence

The notion of original sin, of the fallenness of man, appears from the perspective of contemporary ethical reality to have outlived its meaningfulness.

1. Sin is, above all, a moral category; it is not ontological. For modern man, there is no such thing as sin of creation, of nature, of man as such, no sin as entry into existence or space-time. Physical death is perhaps the deepest mystery of the process of space-time; it is certainly a disvalue, but it is not moral, and therefore not sin, nor the consequence of sin.

2. Moral sin is not hereditary; neither is it vicarious, or communal, but always personal, always implying a free choice and a deliberate deed on the part of a moral agent in full possession and mastery of his powers. The actual involvement, or the 'attraction', or 'preparation', to which the free moral agent may be subject by merely being a member of his family, of his community, of his religio-cultural group, is not denied. Modern man is also aware that sin is an evil act the ontic consequences of which – whether material or psychological – diverge in space-time *ad infinitum*, affecting in some measure the being and lives of other people. He is equally aware that such consequences are not moral precisely because they are ontic, i.e., necessary, involving no choice on the part of the person whom they affect. Moreover, modernity has removed the hitherto necessary connection between existence and membership in the family, community or religio-cultural group. It was this strict necessity of the connection, characteristic of ancient societies, which, though partially, had induced the fathers to represent sin as a necessary and universal category. The modern Muslim and Christian no more hold a man as member of a group and as subject to the fixations operative in that group except as the result of a decision that man makes for himself. This is particularly true of those societies which have achieved a high degree of internal mobility, especially true of Western society. But the fact is that the whole world is moving in that direction and the day is not far away when, from the perspective of the now-forming world community, the universalization of education and the termination of the age of societal isolation, it will be relatively easy to move from one culture to another.

3. Sin is not only a doing, whether introverted, as when the doing is strictly within the person's soul directly affecting neither

his body nor anything else outside his soul, or extroverted, as when the doing is spatial involving his body, the souls and bodies of others, or nature. Such doing is only the spatio-temporal consequence of sin. Sin is primarily a perceiving. Here lies its locus and genesis, i.e., in perception. Its effect is in intent and doing. Accordingly, it can be counteracted only in the faculties of perception and its solution must therefore be in education. It is obvious that retaliation and retribution are by themselves inadequate to meet sin wherever it may take place. That forgiveness is equally inadequate becomes clear when we consider that by releasing the ethical energies of the sinner from frustration at his own misdeed, the spiritual power of forgiveness can cure only the sinner with strong ethical sensitivities. For it takes a sinner genuinely frustrated by his own moral failure to respond to its moving appeal. The rest – and the rest is surely the great majority – remain untouched by its power, if not encouraged and confirmed in their sinfulness. Education, on the other hand, ministers to everybody's need. It is universal in its application as all men stand to benefit from its fruits. Admittedly, forgiveness does have an intrinsic power which acts on all perceiving subjects moving them to emulate the forgiver. Like love, courtesy and respect, it is 'contagious'. But it is forever personal, its activity and effect are always erratic; whereas education is always subject to deliberation, to critique and to planning.

4. It is within the realm of perception that the modern Muslim and Christian can make sense out of the Christian figurization's notion of sin. From this perspective, sin is man's propensity to ethical misperception. It is an empirical datum whose ubiquitousness is very grave and disturbing. Nonetheless, it is not necessary. The general propensity to ethical misperception is counterbalanced by the propensity to sound ethical perception which is at least as universal as its opposite. Indeed, there is far more value in the world than there is disvalue, far more virtue than sin. If by nature man falls in error in his cognition of the ethical, of value, it is equally by nature, if not by

a stronger nature, that he is driven to keep on looking and trying despite the faltering. 'Man by nature desires to know' the true, the good and the beautiful (said Aristotle); and 'man is doomed to love the good' and pursue the true and the beautiful (said Plato). While his soul yearns for, seeks and pursues value, man's natural 'will to live' keeps him on his feet, and his 'will to do' propels him forward despite the setbacks of sin. True, man is by nature inclined to moral complacency, but he is equally inclined to the life of danger. And while modern man is certainly resolved in favour of the latter, our reason tells us that we should encourage him all the more because the life of danger holds the greater promise. Man may and certainly will err in ethical perception. But he is not hopeless; nor are his misperceptions – his sins – incorrigible. His fate, blest or unblest, devolves in the first place upon him alone.

If this is convincing to both, the dialogue must move on towards revivifying the figurization – recapturing whatever truth there is in it. We may hence expect it to bring out the following point. Ethical misperception, in all its varieties, is that which we ought to guard against, to avoid and to combat in ourselves, in others and in all men. Indubitably, we must become fully aware of the enemy, of his tactics and defences, of his nature and constitution, if we are to fight him successfully. In the mind of the general, a very prominent place is occupied by 'the enemy'. It was such genuine awareness on the part of the fathers that induced them to put sin in man's flesh, in the passions for the lower values of pleasure and comfort, of life and power, in the overhasty realization of value, the surmounting of man's cosmic station, in the arrogant pride that the ethical job of man on earth has already been done and finished. In this sense everyone is susceptible to sin as every man has his temptations, his weak moments when his ethical perception is dimmed and his moral vigour is dull and slow to act. To be always conscious of this disposition, i.e., to keep it constantly in mind as the negative object of the moral struggle, is the peculiar merit of the fathers' emphasis on sin.

Unlike the fathers, therefore, the modern Christian and Muslim cannot think of sin as the predicament out of which there can be no hope of deliverance save by a non-human, divine act. Even if, in the interest of final victory in man's moral struggle, we overestimate the enemy, victory must certainly be possible if it is to be an objective and the struggle is to be sustained despite the eventual setbacks. Were we to grant that sin is necessary but keep in mind its meaning as ethical misperception, we would be contradicted by the fact that man has in fact perceived rightly when he perceived God's past revelations as genuine. This inconsequence may not be removed except by adding another fantastic assumption nihilating man's responsibility for genuine perception, namely, predestination to right perception. But that is a pure fabrication; that perception which is not the person's perception is not perception.

Finally, the dialogue must move towards a clear answer to the ethical question. If we keep our balance, we will recognize that the right mental and emotional attitude to sin is to keep it in consciousness in order to avoid and to surmount it. The road hitherto is and can only be education, the axiological anamnesis which causes man to see for himself, to perceive value and expose his own ethos to determination by it. The teacher in general, whether mother, father or elder, teacher by concepts, or by example, is precisely the helper who helps man perceive rightly and thereby surmount the sinful misperceptions. Education is the unique *processus* of salvation. No ritual of water, therefore, or ablutions or baptism, of initiation or confirmation, no acknowledgement of symbols or authority, no confession or contrition, can by themselves do this job for man. Every person must do it for himself, though he may be assisted by the more experienced; and everybody can.

B. Justification as Declaring or Making Good

Looking at the figurization created by the fathers, the contemporary Muslim and Christian observe that its notion of justification as a declaring or making good the person who has

acknowledged the figurization does not accord with contemporary reality. Here three considerations are in order. First, where ethical misperception has been the fact or the rule, no confession of any item in the figurization will transform misperception into perception. Even the confession of God as conceived of in the figurization does not constitute the 'entrance ticket' we mentioned earlier, the *sine qua non* of salvation. What will do so is the confession of the content of divine will, of value itself. For it is the *matériel* values themselves, not the concepts and theories of 'God' or 'divine will' as enunciated or elaborated by the figurization, that move the human soul, that can be realized once they are known, and that must be known in order to be realized.

Second, education, as we have defined it, is a long and continuous growth which has no divisions admitting of the representation of its processes as a before and an after. Neither is the realm of values (the will of God) divided into two parts such that only the attainment of one, rather than the other, may be said to constitute, or begin, ethical living. Genuine perception, therefore, as well as genuine value-realization, is with the child as well as with the mature elder, though the objects (values and their relations) discerned may belong to different orders of rank. Salvation or, rather, an amount of it may be the work of the 'faithful' of any religion as that of the 'faithless' – the *goyim* or *barbaroi* of any faith without regard to the figurization to which they subscribe. The child must then be 'justified' as much as the adult, the 'sinner' as much as the 'saved', provided he perceives that which his yet-undeveloped, or little developed, faculties enable him to perceive. Value-perception is a continuous growth-process. It does not admit of a moment of justification before which there was no growth at all and then, by divine fiat, it has come to be. Third, perception of genuine value is only the beginning of the process of felicitous achievement. Beyond it yet lies the longest and hardest part of the road, the realization in space-time of that which had been correctly perceived.

Another meaning of confession is conversion. It consists of a new openness of mind and heart to the determining power of the divine, of value. It is the state of fulfilment of the admirably-

stated first command of Jesus, namely, to love God with all one's mind, all one's heart and all one's power.¹¹ This is certainly a radical transformation, for it entails a deliberate willingness to seek the good and to submit to its determination rather than to evil's. As the first step of faith, however, it must stand below the act of confession as perception of value at all. All it recognizes is the value of submission to value which is also a prerequisite but more fundamental, more elemental, than the first. It can also refer to an attitude that comes after perception of the whole, or a large part of the realm of value. In this case, it is of momentous significance if we regard the ethical phenomenon as necessarily broken into perception and action, as separate successive stages between which the devil and his temptations may intervene. This view rests upon the groundless assumption that ethical perception is formalistic and, hence, discursive and intellectual (Kant's [1724-1804] 'practical reason' trying to subdue and to discipline an erratic '*Willkür*'). The establishment of ethical perception as emotional *a priori* intuition (Scheler [1874-1928], Hartmann) has recaptured the unity of the ethical phenomenon as perception and action at the same time, and proved the Socratic formula 'knowledge = virtue' once again true.

There is yet another sense, recognized and well-emphasized by the figurization of Christianity, in which faith and its confession can constitute a real achievement. This is the sense in which the confession of faith, i.e., the subject's conviction that he is now reconciled to God and accepted by the community, means the liberation of his ethical energies for self-exertion in God's cause. Since the state of sin is by definition the undesirable state of being, and faith is the consciousness of this undesirability at all levels, the solemn confession of faith becomes the resolution not to relapse into that which has so far been rightly perceived as undesirable. Psychologically speaking, assurance of the acceptance by God and the community of this resolution as something serious and significant, has the good effect of removing whatever fixity misperception may have developed in the moral subject and releasing his energies towards value-realization, *as if* a new page had been turned in his book-of-life.

Though this must remain a mere 'as-if', it is a powerful moment psychologically. In a person of ethically sensitive nature, the consciousness of sin may possess that person to the point of frustrating his determination by the good, his will to right perception and right action. In such a person, the phenomena of repentance, confession, reconciliation and acceptance can not only release pent-up energies but create new ones and orient them towards the good to which they can then rush with a great surge. But, as we have said earlier in connection with the psychological effect of salvation upon the subject, we must remember that such responses and effects are the prerogative of the few, just as great sin equally belongs to the few. The majority, however, remains as little determined by the one as by the other. In the mediocre measure that the majority can have either the cause (sin) or the effect (justification), the advantage of the confession of faith must perforce be equally mediocre.

There is a sense, therefore, though a unique one indeed, in which the act of faith carries an ontic relation to man and cosmos, which is its capacity to infuse into the psychic threads of the subject new determinants and thus bring about a new momentum as it deflects the causal threads from the courses they would have taken had these new determinants not entered the scene. This 'plus' of determination is as ontically real as any natural determination since both of them equally produce the same result, namely, the deflection of causal threads to ends other than those to which they would lead otherwise. But we should guard against ever confusing the nature of this 'plus'. It is certainly not a *justifaci*, a making just, for, ontologically speaking, the deflection of causal threads which constitutes the moral deeds have not yet taken place though it has become a real possibility. Nor is it a declaring just in the forensic sense that, whereas the same person remains the same, the scales of justice that pronounced him sinful have just been tipped in his favour by the fact of solemn confession. Such would be literally a case of 'cheating'. Nor, finally, is justification a considering of the sinful as innocent, ethically speaking. For it is neither a category of God's thought, nor one of man's deeds which belong to history and can never

be undone. It is only a psychic release in the justified sinner, whose real value is not intrinsic but derivative of that of the values which the newly-released energies may, or may not, realize.

C. *Redemption as Ontic Fait Accompli*

Thirdly, looking at the figurizations of the fathers, the modern Muslim and Christian recognize that redemption is not a *fait accompli* inasmuch as the filling of space-time with realized value is not yet, but has still to be done by man; that it is man's works, his actualization of divine will on earth as it is in heaven, that constitutes redemption. Were redemption a *fait accompli* in this sense, i.e., were the ethical job or duty of man towards God done and finished, his cosmic status, and hence his dignity, would be impaired. In that case, morality itself falls to the ground. Salvation must flow out of morality, not vice versa. The only morality that can flow out of accomplished salvation necessarily robs man's life and struggle in space-time of its gravity, its seriousness and significance. True, the already-saved man is not free to lead any life and must live like a person unto whom God had accomplished salvation. Such a man will therefore be under the obligation of gratitude for the salvation done. Far from underrating the order of rank of the ethical value of gratitude, the modern Muslim and Christian find any ethic in which gratitude is the determining corner-stone inadequate to confront space-time, to govern the plunging of oneself into the thick of tragedy-laden existence, to guide man's efforts for transformation of the universe into one fully realizing the will of God. Historically speaking, and in the figurizations of Christianity and Islam, the ethic of gratitude that emerged out of the notion of redemption as a *fait accompli* devaluated space-time as an unfortunate, insignificant interlude, the end of which was eagerly awaited. In the perspective of such an ethic, the fulcrum of life and existence is clearly shifted outside of space-time, which becomes no longer the 'body' and theatre in which the will of God is constantly prayed to be and should be done. That is all in

addition to the superciliousness and complacency which the carrying around of one's title to paradise generates. If, on the other hand, redemption is remembered – and affirmed – to be the doing of man's cosmic vocation, the realization of value in space-time, then the assumption of redemption as accomplished salvation must be the greatest sin.

This consideration need not blind us to the fact, hinted at in the foregoing section, that redemption does achieve an ontically real accomplishment: namely, the release of energies and the infusion of determinants which would not have become real otherwise, and the actualization of ends other than those to which the un-increased determinants and energies would have led. But the 'plus' of determination, the pent-up energies released by the redemptive act of faith are not bound to produce any given ends. As a rule, they will go to reinforce those applications of energies, or those causal nexus at which the moral subject has already been working; and the act of faith presupposes that what has been discerned is the genuine truth, goodness and beauty. But the application of the new energy to the pursuit of what has been rightly discerned is not necessary. That is why sin is possible even after redemption – a fact which the figurization which understands redemption as a being-done of man's ethical vocation cannot recognize or affirm except through the inconsequence of paradox. Thus, it takes something more than redemption in the sense of forgiveness and release of ethical energies to achieve salvation in the sense of ethical felicity, of realizing value in space-time, of deflecting its threads towards value-realization, the bringing about of the *matériaux* of value and of filling the world therewith.

In giving us the notions of justification and redemption, therefore, the canonical figurizations gave us merely a prolegomenon to ethical salvation. These notions provide a cure for those who need it and these are of two kinds: the hypersensitive person, whose consciousness of his past ethical shortcomings and misperceptions has prevented him from trying again; and the hypochondriac, who dwells on his sad state of affairs so strongly and so long that he forgets that there is a task yet to be per-

formed, however bad his past may have been, and that his complaining will not perform that task. Just like the man who has been so sick that he has lost the sense of life and can think only of death, and who will lead a superficial life if he were to come to a sudden cure, so the moral hypochondriac, upon redemption, would hardly exert himself morally, or know what to exert himself for, as his ethical vision has been warped by the long illness. Such a man will never recover from the event of his cure, of his redemption. He will never pass to the sanity, sobriety and gravity of facing space-time with its crying need for God, for value.

Both these types are rare: mankind is neither made of ethical geniuses and heroes, nor of hypochondriacs. For the majority of men, redemption remains an event of expected significance only inasmuch as it is the perception of that which ought to be and, in this capacity, it is an actual embarkation on the ethical road, a prolegomenon to real felicity. Valuable and necessary as it may be, it constitutes no salutary merit and those who have achieved it have achieved only the beginning. They are not the elect in any sense, and neither is their salvation guaranteed. What they achieve is not only possible, but actual for every man; all men must come to it sooner or later by nature as they begin consciously to live under the human predicaments of desiring knowledge and of loving the good. Far from furnishing ground for a new 'election', a new particularism, and a new exclusivism, redemption in the only sense in which it makes sense, namely value-perception and value-realization, is truly universalist in that it expresses modalities of ethical living which are actual in all human beings. Ethical salvation, on the other hand, i.e., the actualization of divine will or moral value, is a progressive achievement open to all men by birth; and it is judged and measured on the scale of an absolute justice that knows no alternative to or attenuation of the principle 'Better among you is the more righteous', for 'whoso doeth good an atom's weight will see it then, and whoso doeth ill an atom's weight will see it then'.¹²

Prospects

This has been a sample dialogue between Islam and Christianity. It has anchored itself in a common reality and paid the tribute due to the canonical figurizations. Beyond the latter, however, it has moved towards reconstructing religious thought consonantly with its own experience of reality and, without violating any of the necessary conditions of dialogue. However hard the results may have been on the Islamic and Christian figurizations, they can be claimed and asserted by the modern Christian as a continuation of that same loyalty to Jesus which produced the Christian figurization, and *mutatis mutandis* in the case of the modern Muslim. The novelty is that in asserting them the Christian is joined by the Muslim, and their communion will undoubtedly open limitless vistas of common religious and moral ideas for further exploration. As to whether the Christian is likely to enter into dialogue and follow this course in our generation, I am pessimistic.

A. The Catholic Church

On the Catholic side, we can safely take the record of Vatican II not only as representative, but as determining the future for at least this generation. As regards the issues taken up by the foregoing dialogue, Catholic Christianity is still to be heard from. As far as I know, Vatican II has not even attempted to discuss such issues, let alone re-present them as objects of a critical Christian-Muslim dialogue. It has stopped the calling of non-Christians by bad names. But that is too modest a contribution. Modern man takes the prerequisites of politeness, courtesy and mutual respect for granted, and he is not moved to admiring trance by an assertion or defence of them. As far as the Muslim is concerned, such defence is fourteen centuries late.¹³

As a matter of fact, Vatican II left much to be desired that is of far greater importance. Besides joining the Muslims to the devotees of most archaic religions, the statement - 'the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator . . . the Moslems . . . [and] those who in shadows and images seek

the unknown God' – merely subsumes them under the call of God.¹⁴ The universality of the call is not an actual but an ought-universality, and hence it does not yield the desired universalism at all. If God called all men, it goes without saying that the Muslims are included. To exclude them is tantamount to counting them among the trees. If this is an advance over the former position where the Muslim was regarded as a sub-human, it is an advance which stinks by virtue of this relation. Moreover, the same document has stressed that of the pious among those who 'do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church' only those may 'attain to everlasting salvation' who do so 'through no fault of their own'.¹⁵ The Muslim who has been thrice Christian is therefore excluded. The judgement – 'whatever goodness or truth is found among them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel'¹⁶ – may be as old and classical as Eusebius (c. 264–340) to which the text proudly refers. Condescending? Indeed! Do I see progressivism at the apex of which stands Christianity as the archetype of religion and the other religions as faltering approximations? Yes; but wait for the explanation of this religious diversity and imperfect approximations outside of Christianity! 'Often men, deceived by the Evil One, have become caught up in futile reasoning and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, serving the creature rather than the Creator!'¹⁷ The non-Christians do not even know God; neither do they serve Him! This is utterly out of tune with the twentieth century. Name-calling will not do. It is amazing that despite this low esteem of those who are not Christians, Vatican II agrees with my plea to seek mutual understanding and cooperation on the ethical level, 'to make common cause . . . on behalf of all mankind . . . of safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom'.¹⁸ As a Muslim who has been thrice Christian, I applaud and stretch forth my hand in the hope that my Sermon-on-the-Mount ethic may prove contagious.

B. The Protestants

Unlike the case of Catholics, no pronouncement is vested with decisive authority for Protestants. Their position would have to

be surmised from the writings of those who regard themselves as the spiritual thinkers of their community. I therefore propose to do no more than plumb one thinker on this matter who, many Protestants will probably agree, stands on the frontier of Christian theology. That is the late Paul Tillich.

In his *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, Tillich repudiated the neo-orthodox approach which refuses even to acknowledge the existence of such a problem as man's religions pose for Christianity.¹⁹ He criticized the progressivist explanation of the religions of the world and refuted the circular arguments of those theologians who, assuming Christianity to be the *typos* of religion, measure man's religions with its rod.²⁰ He spoke of an original universalism of the early Church meaning thereby Christianity's adoption of elements from other religions and their subjection to the particularist idea of Jesus as the Christ.

Though commendable, this idea is hardly adequate to meet the issue of inter-religious confrontation.²¹ The problem is not one of approving of or adopting that which agrees or can be made to agree with us but of what to do with that which contradicts us, that which stands on the other side of us. On this issue Tillich suggests the possibility of self-criticism in light of the difference with other religions. Appropriately, he entitled his concluding lecture 'Christianity Judging Itself in the Light of its Encounters with the World Religions'. No more promising title can be found than this. But before he let his audience rise to cheer, Tillich dissolved the whole promise as he defined the basis of any future self-judgement of Christianity. 'There is only one point', he said, 'from which the criteria can be derived and only one way to approach this point. The point is the event on which Christianity is based, and the way is the participation in the continuing spiritual power of this event, which is the appearance and reception of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, a symbol which stands for the decisive self-manifestation in human history of the source and aim of all being'.²² Evidently, the basis is not God, nor the will of God, but the Christian figurization of God. But loyalty to figurization produces footnotes and commentaries, not

knowledge; and Christianity, if based upon such a principle, will learn nothing at all.

Here Tillich has failed in our fifth methodological principle, namely, freedom *vis-à-vis* the canonical figurization. It seems as if Tillich, despite the depth and breadth of his vision, is telling the Muslim: Assuming the Council of Nicaea consisted of God as chairman, His angels and prophets as members, and that it did unanimously and under express divine command decide for all eternity what it did decide, what use can we make of what you or any other religion has to offer? The Muslim retort is that it is precisely here in the Nicene Council that the dialogue will have to start, if at all, assuming that the Council is still on and deliberating. Consisting of men with holy as well as unholy motives and presided over by a pagan emperor interested in the political unity of the Empire more than in the truth, the Council is either closed and hence only of didactic value to modern man, or open and modern man may participate therein as constituent member.²² It was precisely at Nicaea that the split of Christianity into Eastern and Western formally began, not in the meaning usually attached to these terms as denoting the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church, or the Churches of the West as distinguished from those of the East, but in the older sense of a Semitic Christianity of so-called 'heretic' churches of the East and a Christianity figurized under terms supplied by Hellenistic consciousness. Only at 'Nicaea' can the dialogue with Islam, the heir of that Eastern Christianity which was hereticated at Nicaea, be resumed.

In the last lecture of his career, 'The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian',²⁴ Tillich did not progress beyond the foregoing position. He called 'Religion of the Concrete Spirit' the '*telos*' or the 'inner aim' which the history of religions 'is to become'. This is composed of three elements: 'the sacramental basis' which is 'the universal . . . experience of the Holy within the finite'; the 'critical movement against the demonization of the sacramental'; and the 'ought-to-be . . . the ethical or prophetic element [which] becomes moralistic and finally secular' without the other two.²⁵ One can hardly miss the

parochial representation of Western Christianity in this scheme where the first element is the Jesus-event, the second the Reformation, and the third, the secular moralistic humanism of modern times. And we must, in addition, overlook Tillich's lack of information, at least regarding Islam, evident in his generalization that 'the universal religious basis is the experience of the Holy within the finite'.²⁶

Having defined these elements, Tillich then tells us that they always struggle against one another; but that when integrated within the Religion of the Concrete Spirit, they struggle as one organic whole against the domination of each.²⁷ 'Kairoi' or 'moments . . . in which the Religion of the Concrete Spirit is actualized fragmentarily can happen here and there'.²⁸ But 'the whole history of religions' is 'a fight for the Religion of the Concrete Spirit, a fight of God against religion within religion'.²⁹ In this continuing world struggle of God against the demonic forces, 'the decisive victory' was 'the appearance of Jesus as the Christ'.³⁰ 'The criterion' of victory, or of the presence of the Religion of the Concrete Spirit is 'the event of the cross. That which has happened there in a symbolic way, which gives us the criterion, also happens fragmentarily in other places, in other moments, has happened and will happen even though they are not historically or empirically connected with the cross'.³¹ Tillich even suggests the re-use of the symbol 'Christus Victor' in this view of the history of religions.³² How do we know that what happened in the *kairos* of Muhammad or of the Reformation was 'a fragmentary event of the cross' unless it is assumed that all religious moments are *kairoi* of the same? But if this is assumed beforehand, what novelty did the minor premise bring? Obviously, this is the same circular reasoning Tillich had criticized in Ernest Troeltsch and Rudolph Otto, however disguised the terms.

Tillich's 'last word' was his answer to the question of the meaning of the history of religions 'to the religion of which one is the theologian'. 'Theology', he claimed, 'remains rooted in its experiential basis. Without this, no theology at all is possible'. Thus, in loyalty to the canonical figurization, Tillich persistently

refused to recognize any sacrament-free consciousness as religious. Straight-jacketed by his own self-imposed limitation to the experience of the Christian figurization, the Christian theologian is to spend the rest of time 'formulat[ing] the basic experiences which are universally valid [*sic*, the experience of the holy in the finite is anything but universal] in universally valid statements'.¹¹

How can such an attempt see anything in the religions of man but fragmentary realizations of the Christian experience? Can it be said that such an attitude enables the Christian to understand the other faiths of other men, let alone produce a fruitful dialogue with the men of other faiths?

As for his systematic theology, its pages run counter to every one of the ethical insights we have attributed to modern man. One might conclude that if Tillich were still alive, he would not carry the dialogue a single step forward. Surprisingly, however, this conclusion is not true. For just before he died, he read the sections of this paper entitled 'Methodology of Dialogue', 'Themes for Dialogue' and 'Dialectic of the Themes with the Figurizations' and wrote in a letter to the author: 'I ... read your manuscript and thought it was an excellent basis for any discussion between Christianity and Islam. You bring out the points of difference with great clarity and sharpness. Not in order to let them stay where they are, but in order to show that behind the different figurizations there is, especially in the present moment, a common ground and a common emergency. I believe that with this presupposition in mind, a discussion could be very fruitful.'

This was a surprise. It recaptures my lost optimism.

Notes

1. *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1960 [revised edition, Oxford: Oneworld, 1993]; *Islam, Europe and Empire* (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1966).

2. In considering that history one must take account of the following facts: The first missionaries which Islam sent to Christendom were met with swords drawn and were massacred at Dhāt al-Tāh in 629 CE. From that moment, however,

a section of Christendom which might be called 'Semitic Christianity' welcomed the Muslims, gave them protection, listened to and were converted by, or simply tolerated them. These Christians were for the most part Arab or Semitic, though not necessarily Arabic-speaking, and a fair number were Copts, whether Abyssinian or Egyptian. The Abyssinian state, Christian and theocratic, had previously welcomed and protected the Muslim refugees from Makkah and was regarded as a friend by the Muslims ever since. With the rise of the Islamic state and the entry of Islam onto the stage of history, a much older division began to resume its shape; the division of Christianity itself into Eastern and Western, Semitic and Hellenic.

Though they had abandoned most of the so-called 'heretical' doctrines of their ancestors, submitted themselves to the main pronouncements of the synods and councils and acquiesced to the theological, Christological and ecclesiological tenets of Catholic Christianity, the Semitic Christians cooperated with the Muslims. Despite the fact that the innate appeal of Islam, its exemplars in life and action, and the continuous exposure to its civilizing and cultural power had taken their toll of converts from their ranks, these Christians have survived in considerable numbers fourteen centuries of living under the political rule of Islam. Islamically acculturated they certainly are; but not converted. They constitute a living monument of Christian-Muslim co-existence, of mutual tolerance and affection, of cooperation in civilization and culture building. Their inter-religious *modus vivendi* is an achievement in which the whole human race may take rightful pride.

On the other hand, Western Christians, embittered by a military defeat initially brought about by their own intolerance to allow the Islamic call to be heard, nursed their resentment and laid in wait. For three centuries, sporadic fighting erupted between the two camps without decisive advantage to either party. In the eleventh century, the Western Christians thought the time had come to turn the tables of history. The Crusades were launched with disastrous consequences to Christian-Muslim and Muslim-Christian religions. Christian executions, forced conversions or expulsion of the Muslims from Spain followed the political defeat of the Muslim state. For eight centuries, Islam had been the faith not only of immigrant Arabs and Berbers but of native Spaniards who were always the majority. The 'inquisition' made no differentiation; and it brought to an end one of the most glorious chapters in the history of inter-religious living and cooperation.

Modern times brought a story of continuous aggression and tragic suffering beginning with the pursuit and obliteration of Islam from Eastern Europe where the Ottomans had planted it, to the conquest, fragmentation, occupation and colonization of the whole Muslim World except the impenetrable interior of the Arabian Peninsula. Muslims remember with bitterness that this is the period when Christendom changed the script of Muslim languages in order to cut off their peoples from the Islamic tradition and sever their contact with the heartland of Islam; when it cultivated and nursed Hindu and Buddhist reaction against the progress of Islam in the Indian subcontinent; when it invited the Chinese to dwell and to oppose Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia; when it encouraged the Greeks in

Cyprus and the Nile Valley, the Zionists in Palestine and the French in Algeria; when, as the holder of political and economic power within the Muslim World, Christendom discouraged, retarded or impeded by every means possible the awakenings, renaissance and self-enlightenment processes of Muslim societies; when, controlling the education of Muslims, it prescribed for it little beyond the purpose of producing clerks for the colonialist administration.

Equally, modern times witnessed the strongest movement of Christian proselytization among Muslims. Public education, public health and welfare services were laid wide open to the missionary who was accorded the prestige of a colonial governor, and who entered the field with pockets full of 'rice' for the greedy, of intercession with the colonialist governor for the enterprising, and of the necessities of survival for the sick and the needy.

Throughout this long history of some fourteen centuries of Christian-Muslim relations, the researcher can hardly find one good word written or spoken about Islam by Christians. One must admit that a number of Semitic Christians, of Western Christian Crusade-annalists or of merchants and travellers may and did say a few good words about Islam and its adherents. Samplings of this were given by Thomas Arnold in his *The Preaching of Islam* (reprinted by Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1961), especially the conclusion. Modern times have seen a number of scholars who conceded that Muhammad's claims were candid, that Islamic religious experience was genuine, and that underlying the phenomenon of Islam, the true and living God had been and still is active. But these are isolated statements even in the life of those who made them, not to speak of the deluge of vituperation and attack upon Islam, Muhammad and the Muslims which fill practically all Christian writings about the world of Islam. Moreover, whatever little may be found belongs to Christians as individual persons. Christianity as such, i.e., the bodies which speak in its name, be they Catholic, Protestant or Greek Orthodox, has never recognized Islam as a genuine religious experience. The history of academic Western Christian writing on the subject of Islam is a history of service to the world of scholarship, though one of misunderstanding and falsification. As a librarian seeking to collate manuscripts, establish texts and analyze historical claims, the Christian scholar has done marvellous work which earned him the permanent gratitude of scholars everywhere. But as an interpreter of the religion, thought, culture and civilization of Islam, he has been – except in the rarest of cases – nothing more than a misinterpreter and his work a misrepresentation of its object. (See the scathing analysis of A.L. Tibawi, 'English-Speaking Orientalists: A Critique of Their Approach to Islam and Arab Nationalism', *The Muslim World*, Vol. LIII, Nos. 3, 4 (July, October 1963), pp. 185–204, 298–313.) Vatican II conceded that 'the Moslems . . . adore one God, living and enduring, merciful and all-powerful, Maker of heaven and earth and Speaker to men . . . they prize the moral life and give worship to God . . . though it carefully equated these characteristics not with actual salvation but with the mere inclusion within 'the plan of salvation' (*The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J., New York: Guild Press [An

Angelus Book], 1966, p. 663). Little rewarding as this concession becomes when conjoined with the earlier statement that 'whosoever . . . knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by God through Jesus Christ, would refuse to enter her or to remain in her could not be saved' (*ibid.*, pp. 32–3), anything similar to it has yet to come from the World Council of Churches – indeed from any Protestant church, synod, or council of churches.

3. Before the Hijrah to Madinah and the establishment of the first Islamic polity, the revelation of Muhammad, i.e., the Qur'ān, defined the religious relation of Islam and Christianity. To the Jews, it asserted, God sent Jesus, a prophet and apostle born of Mary by divine command. He was given the Evangel, taught to relieve the hardships of Jewish legalism and to exemplify the ethic of love, humility and mercy. Those of his followers who remained true to his teaching are blessed. Those who associated him with God, invented trinitarianism and monkery and falsified the Evangel, are not. The former the Qur'ān described in terms reserved for the friends of God: 'The Christians are upright; they recite the revelations of God during the night hours and prostrate themselves in worship. They believe in God and in the Day of Judgement. They enjoin the good, forbid evil and compete in the performance of good works. Those are certainly righteous' (*Āl 'Imrān* 3: 113). 'And you will find among the People of the Book the closer to you those who said that they were Christians; for many of them are priests and ascetics and are humble' (*al-Mā'idah* 5: 82). 'In their hearts, We planned compassion and mercy' (*al-Hadid* 57: 27). Parallel to this lavish praise of some Christians, stands the Qur'ān's castigation of others. 'Some Christians said: The Messiah is the Son of God, thereby surpassing in unbelief the unbelievers of old . . . They have taken their priests and monks for gods, as well as the Messiah, son of Mary, whereas they were commanded never to worship but one God beside Whom there is none else' (*al-Tawbah* 9: 31). 'O People of the Book! Do not go to extremes in your religion and never say anything on behalf of God except the truth. Jesus, the Messiah, the son of Mary, is only a prophet of God, a fulfilment of His command addressed to Mary . . . So believe in God and in His prophets and do not hold the trinitarian view . . . God is the one God. May He be exalted above having a son. To Him belongs everything in heaven and earth' (*al-Nisā'* 4: 171). As for what the Muslim attitude towards Christians should be, the Qur'ān prescribed: 'Say: O People of the Book! Let us now come to agreement upon a noble principle common to both of us, namely, that we shall not worship anyone but God, that we shall never associate aught with Him, and that we shall not take one another for lords beside God. And if they turn away, then say: Remember, as for us, we do submit to God . . . We believe in that which has been revealed to us and that which has been revealed to you and our God and your God is One. It is to Him that we submit' (*Āl 'Imrān* 3: 64; *al-Ankabūt* 29: 46). From this we may conclude that Islam does not condemn Christianity but reproaches some devotees of it whom it accused of deviating from the true path of Jesus. Every sect in Christianity has accused the other sects

of the same. Yet, Christianity has never recognized Islam as a legitimate and salutary movement. It has never regarded Islam as part of its own tradition except to call Muhammad a cardinal in rebellion against the Pope because of his jealousy for not being elected to the office, and Islam a 'derelicta fide catholica' (*Islam and the West*, pp. 83-4).

4. Albert Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought*, tr. C.T. Campion (New York: Mentor Books, 1955), pp. 147-8.

5. See Bertha Spafford Vester's article 'Jerusalem, My Home' in *National Geographic Magazine* (December 1964), pp. 826-47.

6. Christian abuse, the Crusades and the last two centuries of Christian mission have spoilt the chances of the Muslim masses entering trustfully into such common endeavour. For the time being, the grand dialogue between Muslims and Christians will have to be limited to the intelligentsia where, in the main, propaganda does not convince and material influences produce no quibbling. This limitation is tolerable only so long as the Muslim World is underdeveloped and hence unable to match measure for measure – and thus neutralize – the kilowatts of broadcasters, the ink and paper of publishers and the material bribes of affluent Christendom.

7. The Qur'an tells us that Abraham, the paragon of faith in the one true God, asked God to show him evidence of His power to resurrect the dead. When God asked, 'Have you not believed?' Abraham retorted, 'Indeed, but I still need to see evidence so as to put my heart at rest' (*al-Baqarah* 2: 260). Likewise, the Qur'anic discourse with the Makkans concerning their religion and Islam was a rational one, replete with 'evidence' and with the retort, 'Say, Bring forth your evidence [against God's] if you are truthful' (*al-Baqarah* 2: 111; *al-Anbiya'* 21: 24; *al-Naml* 27: 64; etc.). On a number of occasions, the Qur'an speaks of the evidence of God, 'the proof of God' which it goes on to interpret in rational terms (see for example, *al-Nisa'* 4: 174; *Yusuf* 12: 24; *al-Mu'minun* 23: 117; *al-Qasas* 28: 32).

8. *Genesis* 1: 18, 21.

9. *Matthew* 6: 19.

10. Certainly God may and does grant His grace to whomsoever He chooses; but such grace is never a category of the moral life, a credit which can be taken for granted or 'counted upon' by any man. It remains a category of God's disposition of human destinies, never an attribute of men's lives. The gratuitous gift is not a thing earned, by definition; and that which is not earned cannot figure on God's scale of justice – equally by definition.

There is yet another divine grace which is not quite gratuitous. It is called 'grace' by equivocation; for it is a good thing which God grants freely but not whimsically, and which He does only in deserving cases. Such grace is really 'a lift' on the road of ethical perceiving and living, accorded to those who are really

persevering and hard-pressing forward towards the goal. Specifically, it is the gift of a sharper cognition of, or of a more total determination by the goal and no more. It is earned.

11. *Matthew* 22: 37; *Mark* 12: 30; *Luke* 10: 27.

12. *Qur'an*, *al-Zilal* 99: 7-8.

13. 'Call men unto the path of your Lord through wisdom and becoming preaching. Argue with men gently...' (*al-Nahl* 16: 125); 'Tell My worshippers to limit themselves to the comelier words...' (*al-Isra'* 17: 53); 'Do not contend with the People of the Book except with arguments yet more considerate and gentle...' (*al-Ankabut* 29: 46); 'Those are the servants of God who... when the ignorant dispute with them respond with "Peace"' (*al-Furqan* 25: 63).

14. *The Documents of Vatican II*, p. 35.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*, p. 663.

19. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, p. 45.

20. Such as Ernst Troeltsch, Rudolph Otto, Adolph Harnack, etc. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-7. There is historical spuriousness in Tillich's claim that Christianity turned 'radically exclusive and particularistic as the result of the first encounter... with a new world religion', namely, Islam (*Ibid.*, pp. 38-9). In fact, Christianity was radically exclusive at Nicaea and at every other post-Nicene Council. This characteristic was probably developed much earlier than Nicaea. Even if Tillich's claim were true, it constitutes a poor apology. The astounding novelty however is Tillich's claim that Christianity's self-consciousness with respect to the Jews and hence, Christian anti-Semitism, was the result of the shock of the encounter with Islam.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

23. The accounts of the tactics used in the Council or thereafter in order to implement or defeat its decision by the parties involved were far from inspiring any awe or silencing authority. 'Intrigues and slanders of the lowest kind', wrote Harnack, 'now began to come into play, and the conflict was carried on sometimes by means of moral charges of the worst kind, and sometimes by means of political calumnies. The easily excited masses were made fanatical by the coarse abuse and execrations of the opponents, and the language of hate which hitherto had been bestowed on heathen, Jews and heretics, filled the churches. The catchwords of the doctrinal formulae, which were unintelligible to the laity and indeed even to most

of the bishops themselves, were set up as standards, and the more successful they were in keeping up the agitation the more surely did the pious-minded turn away from them and sought satisfaction in asceticism and polytheism in Christian garb', etc., etc. (A. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, tr. Neil Buchanan. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1961, Vol. IV, p. 61).

24. Published together with a number of other lectures by Tillich, and statements of friends at a memorial service dedicated to him, under the title, *The Future of Religions* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 80-94.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-8.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

CHAPTER NINE

Rights of Non-Muslims Under Islam: Social and Cultural Aspects

Introduction

In most ancient civilizations, contact with the non-believer could be made only in times of war, as conqueror or conquered. In either case, he was an enemy by definition. This enmity was the other side of the enmity of his god of the land. His fate was either slavery or death; and more often the latter even after capture.¹ In a few later cases, as in the days of Egypt's Empire (Eighteenth Dynasty) contact with the non-believer took place under terms of trade. Here, the non-believer was tolerated for an *ad hoc* purpose and only for the duration of the trading encounter. As such, that is, as other or non-believer, he was regarded as a barbarian or inhuman.² The alienation was at once religious, linguistic, cultural as well as racial. Egyptian descriptions of the Semites to the East, the Libyans to the West, and the Africans to the South, and Mesopotamian descriptions of Mitannis or Persians, of the 'Men of the Mountains' or Aryans of the North, amply illustrate the point.³

¹ This article was published in *Journal of Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1979), pp. 90-102.

As regards the non-believer, world religions may be divided into two main classes: the universalist religions (Christianity, Buddhism) and the ethnic religions (Hinduism, Judaism).

The Universalist Religions

Both Christianity and Buddhism condemn the non-believer, religiously. Christianity condemns him to eternal doom in hell because he has neither believed nor received any of its sacraments. The condemnation is by God (may He be Glorified and Exalted); and the occasion for it is the rejection by the non-believer of His church on earth, the sole dispenser of His grace. The Church is not *of* the world, though it may be *in* the world. Its jurisdiction is limited to its own realm which Christianity has clearly separated from the realm of Caesar, the secular realm. Paul's statement, 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin' (*Romans* 14: 23) has been understood for nineteen centuries as meaning that everything other than the religious – in short, the world – is evil. The non-believer is condemned on the strength of his non-participation in the things of faith. The other things, the things of the world, are condemned, *a priori*, and therefore what he does or does not do of them is irrelevant. It was only in the previous century that Christian theologians began to discover a relevance for the secular as secular,⁴ and they have not yet succeeded in accommodating their discovery with the central tenets of the faith.⁵

Without God and without the division of life into religious and secular, Buddhism equally condemns the non-believer religiously, i.e., as one who rejects the dogmatic truth it teaches, namely, that all existence is suffering and that one ought to bring about its cessation. The whole of existence, Buddhism holds, is a unity. It is secular; and all of it is one lump of suffering. So, if the non-believer stands condemned, he is so by himself, by virtue of his own deeds, his personal un-wisdom. Just as in Christianity, Buddhism holds that outside the religion, there is not, nor can be, any salvation.

Gnostic Christianity, notably Justin Martyr, suggested a theory of salvation outside Christianity when it understood Christ as a logos present in every human in varying degrees, and called Socrates (469–399 BC) the most, or highest, Christian. But the fury of the doctrinal war in early Christianity stamped out the attempt when Cyprian (c. 200–58 CE) pronounced the principle that outside the Church of Rome there is not, nor can be, any salvation. Cyprian's principle has remained dominant in Catholic as well as Protestant Christianity until today. Modern ecumenism is pressing the Catholic Church to loosen its declared monopoly on God's grace. In response thereto, Karl Rahner (1904–84) wrote an essay entitled 'Anonymous Christians', in which he sought to extend the gift of grace to persons outside the Catholic Church. But his motive was certainly to accommodate the inter-Christian ecumenical dialogue, not the inter-religious. Orthodox and Protestant churches have remained true to this Catholic position, while Buddhism has, as yet, not confronted such pressures.

The Ethnic Religions

The ethnic religions are far more comprehensive in their condemnation of the non-believer, which is both religious and secular. Being ethnic, they understand themselves in terms of theology as well as history; theory as well as practice; personal as well as social ethics.

In Hinduism, the non-believer is condemned on two levels. Religiously, he is alienated from the truth, and he lives in darkness as opposed to the enlightenment of the adherent. His belonging to any religion other than Hinduism is understood as the result of ignorance and aberration. The Law of Karma will, in rebirth, punish him accordingly. In this life, moreover, he is a '*mleecha*'. His fate is worse than that of a '*sudra*' or 'untouchable' – the lowest caste. Both are abominations, unclean, pollutants of everything with which they come into contact. However, the

sudra has a place in the Hindu social system though the lowest; but the *mleecha* has none and must be ejected from society or killed.⁶

In Judaism as in Christianity, the unbeliever is the enemy of God; and as in Hinduism, he is the pariah of society. In addition to this double condemnation, the unbeliever is the enemy of God's 'Chosen People'; an enemy whom the believers should pursue, attack and subjugate or destroy – even in his homeland. 'Thy seed shall inherit the gentiles' (*Isaiah* 53: 3). '... The gentiles shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried by their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face towards the earth, and lick the dust of thy feet ...' (*ibid.*, 49: 22–3). '... To proclaim the vengeance of our Lord ... Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen and your vinedressers ... Ye shall eat the riches of the gentiles. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the gentiles. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish ... I will tread them in my anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments ... For the day of vengeance is in my heart' (*ibid.*, 61: 2, 5–6; 60: 16, 12; 63: 3–4).

The Position of Islam

Islam has acknowledged the non-believer on three distinct levels: The first is that of humanism. Islam introduced the concept of *din al-fitrāh* to express its judgement that all men are endowed at birth by God with a religion that is true, genuine and valid for all time.

Insofar as they are humans, this claim would be true of them that they all have a *sensus communis* by the free exercise of which they can arrive at the essence of all religious truth. Without this natural endowment, man would not be man at all. The universalism of this aspect of Islamic doctrine knows no exception whatever. On this basis of *religio naturalis* Islam has

based its universal humanism. All men are ontologically the creatures of God, and all of them are equal in their creatureliness as well as in their natural ability to recognize God and His law. Nobody may even be excused from not-knowing God, his Creator, for each and every one has been equipped at birth with the means required for such knowledge.

By this concept Islam differentiates between natural religion and the religions of history. The latter are either derivations from this most basic endowment; or they come from other sources such as revelation or human passion, illusion and prejudice. If this kind of religion divides mankind, natural religion unites them all, and puts all their adherents on one level. As the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: 'All men are born Muslims (in the sense of being endowed with *religio naturalis*). It is their parents (tradition, history, culture, nurture as opposed to nature) that turn them into Christians and Jews.' On this level of nature, Islam holds the believer and non-believer as equal partakers of the religion of God.

The second is the level of revelational universalism. Islam holds that 'there is no people but that God has sent them a prophet or warner'; and that 'no prophet was sent but to convey the same divine message, namely, to teach that God is God and that man ought to serve Him' (*Qur'ān, al-Fāṭir* 35: 24; *al-Nahl* 16: 36).

As if what man has been given by nature is not enough, Islam now adds the contribution of history. In history, every people has been sent a messenger, 'To teach them in their own language' (*Qur'ān, Ibrāhīm* 14: 4); and 'none has been sent in vain' (*al-Nisā'* 4: 64). Every messenger conveyed and made understood identically one and the same message from God whose essence is the recognition of Him as God, i.e., as Creator, Lord, Master and Judge, and the service of Him through adoration and obedience. All men, therefore, are recognized as possessors of divine revelations, each fitting its context of history and language, but all identical in their essential religious content. Muslims and non-Muslims are equal in their having once been objects of

divine communication. This concept adds to *religio naturalis* the further universal base of revelation in history. Men's religious differences, therefore, cannot be attributed either to their innate human nature, or to God. Islam thus made possible a distinction between the revealed essence of a religion which it shares with all other religions, and the figurizations, conceptualizations and prescriptivizations of that religion in history. A critique of the historical by the essential, and of the understanding of both by the natural, has become possible for the first time with this breakthrough of Islam.

On a third level, Islam identified itself with much of the historical revelation of Judaism and Christianity. It acknowledged the prophets of the two religions as genuine prophets of God, and accepted them as Islam's own. It taught its adherents to honour their names and memories. True, this does not affect the relationship of Islam with adherents of non-Semitic religions. But with these – and they constitute a significant segment of mankind – Islam erected further bridges of *rapprochement*. With its acceptance of the Jewish prophets and of Jesus Christ, it reduced every difference between itself and these religions to a domestic variation, which may be due to human understanding, rather than to God or the religion of God. It thus narrowed the gap between the Muslims and Jews and Christians to the barest minimum by making the difference internal to the three religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – all at once. Following the Qur'ān, the Muslim declares: 'Worthier of affiliation with Ibrāhīm (and by extension, all Hebrew prophets and Jesus Christ) are, rather, those who follow his religion, this Prophet and the believers' (*Āl 'Imrān* 3: 68). He contends in the details of either religion as an 'intern', rather than as an extern, of the faith. This is the nearest religious standpoint to conversion and absolute identification of the non-believer with the faith in question.

That there still remain many differences between Muslims and non-Muslims is granted, yet it must be borne in mind that

Islam relegates these differences to personal understanding, not to the religions concerned as such. Even so, Islam took care to give all non-believers the benefit of doubt, by withholding judgement until incriminating evidence is at hand. The Muslim is required to begin by assuming that any Jew and Christian adheres to the same faith as that of Islam on the three levels. On this basis God commanded His Prophet to address them in these words: 'O People of the Books, let us now rally together, around a noble principle common to both of us, namely, that we shall serve none but God; that we shall associate naught with Him, and shall not take one another as Lords besides God' (*Āl 'Imrān* 3: 64). Islam has reassured the non-Muslims amply: 'Those who believe (the Muslims) and those who are Jews, Christians and Sabaeans – all those who believe in God and in the Day of Judgement and work righteousness, shall have their reward with God. They shall have no cause for fear, nor for grief' (*al-Baqarah* 2: 62).

Evidently, Islam acknowledges the non-believer religiously. On the religious plane, it grants every non-Muslim in the world a double religious privilege and religious dignity by virtue of his sharing of natural religions and divine revelation in history. If he happens to be a Jew or a Christian, he is granted a third privilege and dignity, namely, that of sharing in the tradition of Islam itself. This third privilege, granted by God in the Qur'ān to the Jews, Christians and Sabaeans was extended by the Muslim to the Zoroastrians, Hindus, Buddhists and adherents of other religions as they came into contact with them.⁷ All three religious privileges, therefore, Islam grants today to adherents of all the religions of the world.

Inviting the Non-Believer to Share in the *Summum Bonum*

The Necessity of Calling the Non-Believer to Islam

It is one of the basic axioms of value theory that the actualization of a value is a value. It would be self-contradictory

to assume something to be good or valuable, and that it ought not to be actualized.

Observable human consciousness and behaviour confirm this initial axiom. Human beings do desire to share the good they perceive and, in the interest of attaining the greatest possible actualization of it, they do desire to share their perception with others. The order of rank of the value in question determines the degree of obligation or desire to make it known to others.

To have a religion is to have access to a whole hierarchy of values. These values are ultimate, they concern the ultimate dimensions of existence and life. Nothing is more valuable than what religion teaches about, namely, God, and His disposal of the lives of humans, knowledge, adoration and love of Him, obedience to Him, fulfilment of His will, the life of *hidāyah* or grace, of vicegerency of God, and the reward of eternal happiness in Paradise – these are ultimate values. They make valuable everything else that is valuable. Hence, they are the axiological bases, the ultimate, or first principles of all good. They are never pursued, as instruments, for some other good. On the contrary, all other goods are sought for their sake. They are final, the highest or most conditioned ends of any moral endeavour.

How could a person who possesses such values, i.e., who is aware of them and actively seeks to realize them, withhold the knowledge of them from his fellow humans. His consciousness and will would rebel against him were he to pass any opportunity to present 'his' values to others and to invite these persons to actualize the values as he does. This requirement of consciousness is what we often call 'conscience' or the voice of conscience. It is the 'hard datum' of the primary consciousness of value, autonomous, *sui generis* and incontrovertible.

Religion does not only give us access to ultimate values, it also introduces us to ultimate truth about our life and existence, about heaven and earth. It convinces us of these truths, for it presents them not as one opinion among others, but as the truth. Some religions hold a relativist theory of truth, maintaining that

their truth is theirs and need not necessarily be the view of others. Such position is held by tribalist or ethnic religions which hardly ever spread beyond the confines of the tribe or ethnic entity. Other religions – and they are the majority – are exclusivist. Their claim is not merely that their thesis is true but that all other theses are false. Religious exclusivism, however, is of two kinds: dogmatic and rational. The former variety, including Christianity and Buddhism, present us with a version of truth – their version – and ask us to acquiesce to it uncritically. Their thesis is that while religious truth is absolute, valid for all time and space, it cannot be contended. It must be either taken or rejected, but not subjected to critical analysis, to argument and the rigours of counter-evidence.

Islam shares with Christianity and Buddhism their exclusivism. It presents its claim as the only true one; but it does not do so dogmatically. Its claim is subject to critique. It is absolute as well as rational or critical, open to counter-evidence, to counter-argument. It is the nature of all rational claims to present themselves with defiance. Argument makes them clearer and strengthens their foundation. Obviously, the rational claim wants to be known, and cannot be ignored except at the risk of proving one either incompetent or inane.

In seeking to convince the Makkans of the veracity of his divine call, the Prophet Muḥammad told them: 'Were I, Muḥammad, Son of 'Abdullāh, to tell you that having gone up this mountain, I have seen an enemy army marching on to Makkah, would you believe me?' 'Yes, indeed', answered the Makkans, 'for we know you never to have lied to us before'. 'Know then', rejoined the Prophet, 'that I have received a call from God to warn you of a great punishment that God will inflict upon you if you persist in your evil ways. How can you not listen, when what is at stake is your very life and destiny.' Obviously, the rational claim to the truth cannot go unheeded except by the insane. There is an inner compulsion on the part of the subject to proclaim it to others, and an innate compulsion

on the part of the others to rise to its challenge, to accept or refute it.

The Freedom to Believe or Not to Believe

The Non-Muslim's Right to be Convinced

The Muslim is obliged by his faith, by the rational, as well as by the axiological nature of his claim, to present Islam to the non-believer. The latter has already accepted the offer of *Pax Islamica*, or the new World Order under which men would renounce war and settle their differences in peace, and communicate with one another. Intellectually and spiritually, the *Pax Islamica* is the guarantee of the freedom to convince as well as to be convinced, of the truth. It implies that the covenant non-Muslim is to make up his own mind regarding the merit or demerit of what is presented to him. The Qur'ān forbids in unequivocal terms any tampering whatever with the process. Repeatedly, God warned His Prophet not to press the matter once he had made his presentation, absolving him of all responsibility for the decision for or against, or indecision, of his audience. Above all:

There shall be no coercion in religion. The truth is now manifest; and so is falsehood. Whoever rejects evil and believes in God has attached himself to the most solid of bonds (*al-Baqarah* 2: 256).

God commanded the Prophet:

Call them unto the path of your Lord through wise argument and fair preaching; and argue with them (the non-believers) with arguments yet more fair, yet more becoming (*al-Nahl* 16: 125).

We have revealed to you the Qur'ān that you may convey it to the people. It is the truth. Whoever accepts it does so to

his own credit. Whoever rejects it does so to his discredit. You are not responsible for their decisions . . . (in case people reject the revelation). Say, I am only a warner to warn you (*al-Zumar* 39: 41, *Yūnus* 10: 108. Also *al-Naml* 27: 92; *al-An'ām* 6: 104; *Sabā'* 34: 50).

Like the presentation of any theoretical thesis, the presentation of Islam to the non-believer can marshal all the evidence it can; but it can do no more than lay it down. To the over-zealous enthusiast who takes men's rejection too much to heart, or who is tempted to go beyond presentation of the truth, the Qur'ān warned:

Had your Lord willed it, all the people of the earth would be believers (But He did not). Would you then compel the people to believe?

O Men, the truth has come to you from your Lord. Whoever wills, may be guided by it; whoever does not will, may not (*Yūnus* 10: 99, 108).

This position of Islam is all too natural. To tamper with the process of intellection by bringing to bear anything extraneous to the argument, would be to vitiate the process. Such interference constitutes a threat to man's integrity and authenticity. Moreover, a decision arrived at through coercion, bribery or any other kind of interference, would not be the decision sought. For it would be not for-its-own-sake; and hence, immoral. Both the subject of such decision and the caller who 'helped' him to it in an illegitimate manner are to suffer punishment in hell. From the standpoint of the Shari'ah, the decision to convert to Islam is null and void to the subject, and a prosecutable crime for the *dā'iyyah*, its instrument.

The Right to be Non-Convinced

Should the non-believer not be convinced of the truth Islam has presented, he is entitled to an undiminished degree of respect. It should be remembered that when the Christians of Najrān heard the presentation made by the Prophet himself and some converted and others did not, he continued to give them the hospitality due, accepted their offer to join the *Pax Islamica*, and sent them back to their homes protected by his own guards and accompanied by a trusted Companion (may Allah be pleased with him) to advise them in their affairs. The free conscience of a man confers upon him unequalled dignity which all the prophets of God knew how to respect. Those of them who took the decision to accept Islam did so of their own free-will, convinced of the veracity of the Islamic claim.

Just as the Muslim may not tamper with the process of conviction with extraneous matters, Islam commands him not to give up in case the non-believer persists in this rejection. Da'wah, or calling men to the truth, is an eternal process. For it to be stopped at any time constitutes evidence of despair. However, despairing of any man's ever seeing the light, of recognizing the truth, is not only an insult to him and his natural capacity but a terrible indictment of the whole human race. It implies a denial of *dīn al-ṣiṭrah*, the natural capacity with which God has endowed all men at birth. Granted *dīn al-ṣiṭrah*, the Muslim must renew his call and entrust the rest to God. Indeed, he must take the non-believer's rejection as a new opportunity God has granted him to think out 'arguments yet more fair, yet more becoming', with which to repeat the presentation. The evidence which can be marshalled being infinite, there is no point at which he can give up the hope or effort to convince. It is this constant pre-occupation with the search, establishment and clarification of the truth, the search for ever-new evidence which makes the Ummah a class-room and laboratory for the truth on a grand scale.

Considering that the Islamic truth is to be appropriated by

Muslims as well as non-Muslims, and considering the infinity of relevant evidence, the infinite variety and depth of intellectual curiosity and spiritual temperament, the dialectical search for the truth is constitutive of the world order of Islam. That is why Islam has praised knowledge and scholarship and regarded the men of knowledge, the scholars, with the highest possible esteem. No religion and no ideology or social system has ever honoured knowledge as much as Islam has. Every page of the Qur'ān pays tribute to knowledge and wisdom, to those who are fortunate enough to have it or cultivate it.

'Those who know and those who have no knowledge, are they equal?' the Qur'ān asks most rhetorically (*al-Zumar* 39: 9). After all, God is author of all knowledge. He is the Teacher:

He taught by the pen . . . He taught man that which he did not know (*al-'Alaq* 96: 4-5).

and He commended:

Do not pursue prejudice and capricious opinion that you may do justly. For if you twist the truth or refrain from acknowledging it, God will know it (*al-Nisā'* 4: 135).

The Right to Convince Others

The non-believer enjoys this third right, the right to convince the Muslim of his views whatever they are. Two reasons justify and strengthen this right of the non-believer under Islam. First, convincing is a two-way affair; it is a process of argument and counter-argument. It cannot take place except in a free dialogue between two conscientious persons or parties. That conviction which has not issued from such dialectical process is not the goal of Islam. Such conviction assumes the bearer to be a *tabula rasa* on which the teacher inscribes his data – which is false. The kind of knowledge in question here is one which is not appropriate unless it has elicited some reaction, produced some change in the orientation of the subject.

Second, it is only natural that if the Muslim is entitled to present his case, that the non-Muslim be equally entitled to do so. This reciprocal right is not affected by either party's abuse, since it belongs to each of them by virtue of their humanity. It cannot be argued that the non-Muslim may not present his case to the Muslims. The Muslims are presumed knowledgeable about the most precious truth they have. If they are unable to refute the non-Muslim's presentation, their duty is to instruct themselves in their faith, or at least to seek such instruction from their men of knowledge. If they are liable to be converted out of Islam through such presentation, their own weakness in knowledge and faith is alone to blame. Islam does not require the Muslims to shield the ignorant, but to instruct and enlighten them. At any rate, with the advances of modernity in communications technology, no such shielding or isolationism will be possible. The counter-argument is going to reach them anyway; and the only protection against an argument is another better, sounder, truer argument.

What may be feared from the exercise of this right by non-believers is sedition or treason against the Islamic state, or against the Ummah as a whole. Such would be illegal under the *Pax Islamica* which the non-believer has agreed to, and is prosecutable under the law of the state. If no sedition is involved, there can be no prosecution and no restriction of the exercise of the right to convince others. In case the non-believer recourses to immoral practices such as bribery or any means of coercion and attraction extraneous to the intellectual or spiritual nature of the argument, the Muslim auditor ought first to reject the presentation and denounce its author. Moreover, the Islamic state then has the right – nay, the duty – to interfere and stop the public intercourse. The state is obliged to protect its citizens against such means. But the honest-to-God presentation, from whichever side it comes, must be allowed to proceed without let or hindrance from any source.

The Freedom to be Different

We have seen that as far as religion is concerned, the *dhimmi*, or non-believer in the Islamic state, or covenanter in the *Pax Islamica*, is acknowledged religiously in his unbelief and granted the rights to convince and be convinced of the truth. It remains for us to ask, concerning the non-believer who persists in his unbelief, how far does Islam tolerate his expression of unbelief in his own life and that of his co-religionists?

The answer was supplied by the Prophet's treatment of the Christians of Najrān, and 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's (c. 581–644 CE) treatment of the Jews and Christians of Byzantium after its conquest. The text of the treaty of surrender of Jerusalem was written by Mu'awiyah (c. 602–80 CE), and signed by the Caliph and by Sophronius (c. 560–638 CE), Patriarch of the city on behalf of the Christians. It read:

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. This is the guarantee granted to the inhabitants of Aelia by 'Umar, Servant of God, Commander of the Believers.

He guarantees for them the safety of their persons, of their goods, of their churches and crosses – whether in good state of repair or otherwise – and generally of their religion.

Their churches will not be changed into dwellings, nor destroyed. Neither they nor their other properties will suffer any damage whatever.

In matters religious, no coercion will be exercised against them; nor will any of them be hurt.

No Jew shall be authorized to dwell in Aelia with them.

The inhabitants of Aelia shall pay the *jizyah* like those of other cities. It will be their duty to eject the Byzantines (i.e., the troops of the Byzantine Empire) and their clients

from the city. Those that leave voluntarily will be granted safe passage. Those who choose to remain in the city may do so provided they pay the *jizyah* like the other inhabitants.

The citizens of Aelia who wish to leave with the Byzantines may do so, and may carry with them their goods, properties and crosses. Safety is hereby granted to them as well.

The farmers who happen to be in the city, may also dwell therein and pay the *jizyah* like the other citizens. In case they prefer to exit with the Byzantines, or merely return to their families on the land, they may do so. No collection will be made from them until after the harvest.

This treaty is given under the guarantee of God and the honour of the Prophet, of the Caliphs and the Believers on condition that the people of Aelia pay the *jizyah* due on them.

Witnesses: Khālīd ibn al-Walīd, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, 'Abd al-Raḥman ibn 'Awf, Mu'awiyah ibn Abī Sufyān who wrote it with his own hand in the year 15 AH."

The same terms were granted by Muslim conquerors to the inhabitants of other cities throughout the provinces brought under the flag of Islam. Notably, Damascus, al-Ḥīrah and 'Anat by Khālīd ibn al-Walīd; Ba'alback, Ḥimṣ and Ḥamāt by Abū 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah; Ragga by 'Iyād ibn Ghunm, as reported by al-Balādhurī in *Futūḥ al-buldān*. Abū 'Ubaydah granted similar terms to the Samaritans of Nablus. These terms constitute the content of the *dhimmah* governing the future relations of Muslims and non-Muslims. In the main, they guaranteed personal and property safety, the right to practice their non-Islamic religions, and to preserve whatever public institutions they had, such as churches and schools, which were

usually attached to the churches. The treaties were all drawn up in terms which were general and which accorded with the normal vocabulary and expectations of their time. Their spirit has remained normative for all Muslims throughout the centuries, though there may have been some variation in application. It must be noted, however, that Muslims have been remarkably true to these covenants their ancestors made with the non-Muslims. Today, we may make our own translation of these treaties into modern parlance, while keeping ourselves true to their spirit. Such translation would include the following rights.

The Right to Perpetuate Themselves

Since the Islamic position tolerated the *dhimmī* in his unbelief, it follows that he should enjoy the right to bring up his children in his own faith. Besides the right connected with the actual exercise of ritual worship, this implies the right to educate, to assemble, to organize activities. The *dhimmī's* right to educate his children concerns religion only, not the civil or public life of the Islamic state as a whole of which he is a member. Hence, the Islamic state should grant his children the right to lessons in their religion at school, but not the right to run their own schools, unless such schools conform in curricula and general spirit to the public schools. The demands of national integration do not permit small systems contributing to fragmentation or dissolution of the unity of the state. If the non-Muslim wishes to impart more religious education to his children, he should be able to do so in the privacy of his home, after school hours. The non-Muslim may not object to his children receiving a lesson in Islam in the public school because, in so doing, they are instructed in the ideology of the state which is Islamic, and thus fulfilling a requirement of political integration and patriotism. Children of Muslim minorities in secular countries should be, likewise, entitled to receive Islamic instruction while other children are receiving

instruction in their religion. If they are subjected to instruction in the secular ideology of the state, they have no recourse but to receive it. If it is to be countered it should be through parental instruction at home. The principle is that just as *dhimmīs* have to submit to and support the Islamic state of which they have covenanted to be members, the Muslim minority ought to submit to and support the alien state in which they have taken residence.

The rights of assembly, or organizing group activities, are also guaranteed by the spirit of the treaties as long as the exercise of these rights does not adversely affect the security, stability, unity, or prosperity of the Islamic state. The *dhimmīs* may organize a conference on Biblical exegesis, systematic theology, Christian ethics, church history or iconography, as they please. But they may not organize a conference on the merits of war and peace with Israel, or on the fitness of the Arabic language for modern development unless the general purport of such conference agrees with the position of the Islamic state.

The Right to Work

In its long history, the Islamic state has fortunately never known any discrimination between its citizens, Muslims or *dhimmīs*, in the field of economic activity. The *dhimmīs* have always enjoyed unrestricted freedom to perform all the professions. In practically all cases, they have fared better than the Muslims in that their share of the gross national product was always larger than that of the Muslims. This is usually an indication that their contribution to the GNP is proportionately larger than that of the Muslims. The result of their superior effort and self-exertion is certainly theirs to enjoy. They may not, therefore, be curtailed in any way if the effects of their earnings show in their houses and buildings, their garments, their horses, automobiles, planes, furniture or other effects of living. If they at one time were prohibited from owning or riding horses, it was

on account of the military value of the horse. This would be comparable to prohibition today to fly Phantom or Mirage airplanes.

May the *dhimmīs* work as government and army officers, and how far up the hierarchy may they aspire to climb? The answer is that they certainly may work in any government service to which their personal training has prepared them, including defence of the Islamic state. Only those positions where the decisions to be made require personal commitment to Islam, may be unavailable to them. Such are the positions in that arm of the judiciary entrusted with the administration of the Shari'ah; or of the executive entrusted with the making of general policy of the Islamic state. Naturally, neither the head of state – the caliph – nor his viziers – may be *dhimmīs*, because of the crucial importance of the judgements they make for the security and welfare of the state as a whole.

The Right to Joy and Beauty

Generally, the *dhimmīs* do have the right to joy, as well as that of expressing themselves in works of art for their own consumption, within the limit of corruption of public morals or undermining of public morale. In the privacy of their own homes, the *dhimmīs* are entitled to enjoy themselves as they please, to contemplate such works of art as they please. The moment such enjoyment poses a threat to public morals, the Islamic state has the right – nay, the duty – to interfere and put an end to the activity. A test case of this right of the *dhimmīs* may be found in the tendency of modern women's fashions toward greater nudity. Islamic morality has a definite stand on nudity. Nudity in public is an offence against that morality and threatens its establishment in the minds and hearts of the Ummah. Accordingly, no *dhimmī's* exercise of his right to joy and beauty may infringe upon the moral sentiment of the public. The same has been literally true of the *dhimmī's* right to use alcohol and pork, and generally to eat or drink during the

fast of Ramaḍān. Such acts are offences against public morality. If carried out in private, they fall within the prerogatives of the *dhimmī* granted by the Islamic state. Equally, the same provision applies to the *dhimmī's* right to play and hear music or to enjoy himself with sound. It is generally recognized that sound pollution may not be tolerated and that the state has the right, and indeed the duty, to intervene to stop it. So far, however, this has been interpreted only in physical terms. Certainly, the Islamic state is obliged to stop physical sound pollution. But it is also obliged to intervene in cases where the pollution is aesthetic, not merely physical. Decadence has many ways; and certainly one of them is through sound. Again, the *dhimmī* may indulge in the privacy of his home but he may not offend by his music or other sounds the aesthetic sentiment of the public.

In this vein, the question may be raised of whether or not the *dhimmīs* may ring their church bells. The answer is that since this is an old, traditional activity intimately connected with religious worship, it ought to be permitted. It was the subject of express authorization in some of the above-mentioned treaties. However, the times at which church bells are supposed to ring are well known. Any increase in their frequency may rightly be subjected to the scrutiny of the state for candidness of motive.

Generally, the *dhimmī* is entitled to actualize all the social and cultural values pertaining to his identity; and he is the sole judge of the circumstances of actualization, as long as the theatre or field of such actualization is his personal home or domain, and the object is his own person or the persons of his own household. The moment that this domain is transcended and the actualization becomes public, or begins to affect other persons, it falls under the restrictive power of the Islamic state. Should the theatre or field be entirely *dhimmī*, as in the case of a village or district whose entire population is non-Muslim, it is legitimate for the actualization to be carried out in public. Such actualization must, however, be careful so as not to infringe at any time on the public sentiments of Muslims.

Conclusion

In brief, it can be said that in the Islamic state, 'religion' in the Western Christian sense of the term (i.e., in the sense of worship, ritual, personal ethics, personal status) is free, without restriction whatever. In the political and economic realm, the *dhimmī* is also as free as the Muslim, the only limitation being the security and prosperity of the Islamic state. He can hold public office or engage in economic enterprise as long as the security and welfare of the Ummah do not depend on his decisions. In the cultural domain, the *dhimmī* is free only in the privacy of his home, or of his village if it is entirely non-Muslim. Once his action involves others not of his faith, his freedom becomes restricted by the cultural norms of the Islamic state.

It may be questioned why, in this age of cultural chaos and licence, the Islamic state should have any cultural stance at all? Should not culture fall within the domain of the personal?

Islam's answer is in the negative. A cultural stance is necessary precisely because of the present nihilistic chaos engulfing the world. The connection of culture with morals, and ultimately with metaphysics and religion, is intimate though not readily visible. No system can survive unless it permeates the levels of culture as it does those of politics and economics. Islam certainly has a distinctive culture of its own. All citizens of the Islamic state must partake of it and exemplify it, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. Otherwise, there would be no justification for the Islamic state. A consumers' cooperative society, or an alliance for defence purposes, would suffice in its stead between the various *milal* (communities) of which it is composed. It is an Islamic state precisely because, in addition to these desirable 'services' of the cooperative society and defence alliance, it has a special spiritual message to offer mankind and a special role in history. The cultural stance is the embodiment of its message and role. This gives the Islamic state a positive function beyond the negative ideal of cessation of hostilities around which the League of Nations was built. Indeed, the United Nations Organization

has hardly transcended this negative ideal, by its numerous projects under UNESCO and other sub-organs. Islam has much more to offer mankind; and the Islamic state is the organ entrusted with carrying out this spiritual, cultural thrust in history.

Notes

1. James Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), pp. 22-3.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-9.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 72 ff., 217 ff., 227 ff., 268 ff., 274 ff., 301 ff., etc.
4. Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1949).
5. For an analysis of this shortcoming, see this author's *Christian Ethics* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1967), p. 248 ff.
6. The category 'Nastika' does not apply to the non-believer but to the member of Hindu society and believer in the Hindu religious system. Hence, he is always a member in good standing of a Hindu caste, who, for one reason or another, has rejected the authority of the Vedas. A Christian in Paris, a Muslim in Cairo, a Jew in New York are all *mlecchas*. Gautama, the Buddha, is a *nastika*.
7. I. al-Faruqi, 'Islam' in *Great Asian Religions* (New York: Macmillan, 1975), p. 329.
8. Ibn Jarir Al-Tabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusūl wa al-Mulūk* (1879-1901), in 13 volumes, paragraph 2405/1. [See in the new edition, Cairo: Dar al-Maaref, 1979, Vol. III, p. 609, paragraph 2406.]

PART III

CHAPTER TEN

On the Nature of Islamic Da'wah

Allah (may He be Glorified and Exalted) has commanded the Muslim: 'Call men unto the path of your Lord by wisdom and goodly counsel. Present the cause to them through argument yet more sound' (Qur'ān, *al-Nahl* 16: 125). Da'wah is the fulfilment of this commandment 'to call men unto the path of Allah'. Besides, it is the effort by the Muslim to enable other men to share and benefit from the supreme vision, the religious truth, which he has appropriated. In this respect it is rationally necessary, for truth wants to be known. It exerts pressure on the knower to share his vision of it with his peers. Since religious truth is not only theoretical, but also axiological and practical, the man of religion is doubly urged to take his discovery to other men. His piety, his virtue and charity impose upon him the obligation to make common the good which has befallen him.

I. Da'wah Methodology

A. *Da'wah is not Coercive*

'Calling' is certainly not coercing. Allah has commanded 'No coercion in religion' (Qur'ān, *al-Baqarah* 2: 256). It is an invitation

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whose objective can be fulfilled only with the free consent of the called. Since the objective is an exercise by the called of his own judgement that Allah is his Creator, Master, Lord and Judge, a forced judgement is a *contradictio in adjecto* and hence punishable with *jahannam*. Humanistic ethic regards coerced da'wah as a grave violation of the human person, second only to homicide, if not equal to it. That is why the Qur'ān specified the means of persuasion to be used. 'Argue the cause with them [the non-Muslims] with the more comely arguments' (*al-Nahl* 16: 125). If they are not convinced, they must be left alone (*al-Mā'idah* 5: 108; *Āl 'Imrān* 3: 176-7; *Muḥammad* 47: 32). Certainly, the Muslim is to try again and never give up that God may guide his fellow-man to the truth. The example of his own life, his commitment to the values he professes, his engagement, constitute his final argument. If the non-Muslim is still not convinced, the Muslim is to rest his case with God. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) himself allowed those Christians who were not convinced by his own presentation of Islam to keep their faith and return home in dignity.

From this it follows that the societal order desired by Islam is one where men are free to present and argue their religious causes with one another. It is a kind of academic seminar on a large scale where he who knows better is free to tell and to convince, and the others are free to listen and be convinced. Islam puts its trust in man's rational power to discriminate between the true and the false. Truth is now manifest from error. 'Whoever believes [i.e., accepts the truth] does so for his own good. Whoever does not believe [i.e., does not accept the truth] does so to his own peril' (*al-Zumar* 39: 41). Islamic da'wah is, therefore, an invitation to think, to debate and argue. It cannot be met with indifference except by the cynic, nor with rejection except by the fool or the malevolent. If it is met by silencing force, then that force must be met by superior force. The right to think is innate and belongs to all men. No man may pre-emptively deny it to any human. Islamic da'wah operates only under these principles. Thomas Arnold's *The Preaching of Islam* is a standing

monument to da'wah written by a Christian missionary and colonialist.

The principle that Islamic da'wah is non-coercive is based upon the Qur'ān's dramatization of the justification for the creation of man. The Qur'ān represents God as addressing the angels in *al-Baqarah* 2: 30, with the words: 'Lo! I am about to place a *khalifah* (vicegerent) on earth. The angels replied: Will You place therein one who will do harm and will shed blood, while we sing Your praise and sanctify You? He said: Surely I know that which you know not.' Also in the Qur'ān, *al-Aḥzāb* 33: 72, we read: 'Lo! We offered Our trust to heaven and earth. They shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. But man assumed it . . .'. Both these statements are understood by Muslims as defining the purpose of man's existence, namely, that he is God's *khalifah*, carrier of the responsibility entrusted to him for the fulfilment of the divine will. That will is already fulfilled in part, within nature as natural law, and not yet fulfilled in another part, by man as moral law. This constitutes man's distinction from all other creatures. Only he acts freely and thus enables himself to actualize the moral part of the divine will. His essence is his capacity for responsible moral action. Coercion is a violation of this freedom and responsibility, and is utterly inconsistent with man's relation to the divine will.

B. *Da'wah is not a Psychotropic Induction*

It follows from the nature of judgement that da'wah cannot have for its objective anything but a conscientious acquiescence to its contents on the part of the called. This means that if the consciousness of the called is in any way vitiated by any of the common defaults or defects of consciousness, the da'wah is itself equally vitiated. Thus a da'wah that is fulfilled through, or whose fulfilment involved in any way, a lapse of consciousness, a lapse of forgetfulness, a lapse in *ta'aqqul* or the intellectual binding of ideas and facts so as to make a cohesive and consistent whole, or a transport of emotion and enthusiasm, a sort of 'trip', is not

Islamic da'wah. Da'wah, therefore, is not the work of magic, of illusion, of excitement, of any kind of psychotropia. In such work, the subject is not in control of his power of judgement, and hence, his judgement cannot be properly said to be his 'personal free judgement'.

The presence of God, that is as Ultimate Reality, Creator and Lord of the Universe, Judge and Master of all men, is a fact which can indeed enter common consciousness. Indeed, Islam holds that were consciousness to be tampered with, the object perceived would not be God, but something else. Under the tremendous impact of revelation itself, the Prophet's consciousness neither lapsed nor became vague as in a mystical experience, but continued to function normally and was even enhanced in its clarity and perception. That is why Islamic law does not recognize the conversion to Islam of the minor child; for his consciousness is presumed immature until he comes of age.

The principle that da'wah has nothing to do with psychotropic induction preserves the freedom and consciousness of choice which cannot be affirmed in case of dilation of consciousness by chemical or mystifying means. It protects the da'wah from being conducted for pleasure, happiness, freedom from care, eudaemonia – indeed, for anything but the sake of Allah. Any ulterior motive would vitiate it in both the giver and the recipient. On the other hand, unconscious conversion of any person who has been tricked into entering Islam is evil; more evil, of course, is the trickster.

C. *Da'wah is Directed to Muslims as well as Non-Muslims*

It follows from the divine commandment that da'wah must be the end product of a critical process of intellection. Its content cannot be the only content known, the only content presented. For there is no judgement without consideration of alternatives, without comparison and contrast, without tests of inner consistency, of general consistency with all other knowledge, without tests of correspondence with reality. It is this aspect of

da'wah that earns for the called who responds affirmatively to its content the grace of *Hikmah* or wisdom. Allah described His prophets and saints as 'Men of *Hikmah*' precisely because their Islam was a learned thing, not a narrow-minded addiction to a single track of thought, certainly not a 'pre-judgement'. That is why da'wah in Islam has never been thought of as exclusively addressed to the non-Muslims. It is as much intended for the benefit of Muslims as of non-Muslims.

Besides stemming from the fact of all men's equal creatureliness in front of God, this universalism of da'wah rests on the identity of imperative arising out of conversion to Islam. All men stand under the obligation to actualize the divine pattern in space and time. This task is never complete for any individual. The Muslim is supposedly the person who, having accepted the burden, has set himself on the road of actualization. The non-Muslim still has to accept the charge. Hence, da'wah is necessarily addressed to both, to the Muslim to press forward toward actualization and to the non-Muslim to join the ranks of those who make the pursuit of God's pattern supreme.

The directing of da'wah to Muslims as much as non-Muslims is indicative of the fact that, unlike Christianity, Islamicity is never a *fait accompli*. Islamicity is a process. It grows, and it is sometimes reduced. There is no time at which the Muslim may carry his title to paradise, as it were, in his pocket. Instead of 'salvation', the Muslim is to achieve felicity through unceasing effort.

D. *Da'wah is Rational Intellection*

Since da'wah is a critical process of intellection, it is of its nature never to be dogmatic, never to stand by its contents as if by its own authority, or that of its mouthpiece, or that of its tradition. For it to be critical means that it should keep itself always open to new evidence, to new alternatives; that it continually cast and recast itself in new forms, in cognizance of the new discoveries of human science, of the new needs of the human situation. In making the da'wah, the *dā'iyyah* labours not as the ambassador of an authoritarian system, but as the co-

thinker who is cooperating with the *mad'ū* (the called) in the understanding and appreciation of Allah's double revelation, in creation and through His Prophets. So much for the standpoint of the *dā'iyah*.

From the standpoint of the *mad'ū*, his process of intellection should never stop. His *īmān* should be dynamic and always growing in intensity, clarity of vision and comprehensiveness. Moreover, conversion to Islam is not a sacrament which, once it takes place, becomes an eternal *fait accompli*. Islam knows of no 'justification by faith', certainly no 'justification' in the sense of *justi facti*. If lethargic and stagnant, *īmān* degenerates into narrow-mindedness and gradually impoverishes its subject. On the other hand, its dynamism – its openness to new knowledge, new evidence and new life-situations, new data, problems, as well as creative solutions which may or may not be derived from the tradition – makes it a source of enrichment for the subject. Fortunate is he whose *īmān* increases in *yaqīn*-ness (certitude) with every new day.

As rational intellection, da'wah shows that in Islam, faith has to do with knowledge and conviction, whereas in Christianity it is, as Blaise Pascal (1623–62) found out, a blind wager. The Arabic word *īmān* does not mean 'faith' as Christians use the term. Rather, it means 'conviction'. It does not involve the functioning of a sacrament. There is no *ex opere operato* principle in Islam.

E. Da'wah is Rationally Necessary

Islamic da'wah is, therefore, the presentation of rational, i.e., critical, truth. It is not the proclamation of an event, or even of a truth (idea), but the presentation, for critical assessment as to truth value, of a proposition, a factum, which has theoretical (metaphysical) and practical (ethical) relevance for man. As to the recalcitrant will, Islam recognized it for what it is, namely, recalcitrant and delinquent, and left the subject of that will to himself until God guides him to the truth. It respected his will and his judgement and, indeed, it extended to him its protections and *Pax Islamica*. But it asked him to respond equally with peace

and not to interfere with his neighbour's right to listen and be convinced. Moreover, the Muslim of history has always presented his case in the open, never entered or practised his Islam in secret. His da'wah preceded his entry onto any international or interreligious scene. In consequence, he interpreted the killing of the *dā'iyah*, the silencing of his da'wah, as a hostile act, a rejection of the peaceful call to reason and argument, and not merely the opposition of a recalcitrant will. That is also why, once his call is answered not with conversion but merely with 'yes, I will think', the Muslim of history has spared absolutely nothing in so presenting his argument as to make it convincing; above all, by embodying it forth in its universalism, justice and brotherhood.

That da'wah is rationally necessary is implied by the fact that in presenting its case, Islam presents it as natural or rational truth. 'Rational' here means 'critical'. Men differ in their use of reason but there would be no point to our dialogue unless we assume the truth to be knowable, that is, unless we believe it possible to arrive at principles which overarch our differences. Therefore, the standpoint of Islam is not an 'act of faith', but one of 'conviction'. It is one of knowledge, of trust in the human power to know.

F. Da'wah is Anamnesis

In commanding the Muslim to call men to the path of Allah, He did not ask him to call men to anything new, to something which is foreign or unknown to them. Islam is *dīn al-ḥanān* (*religio naturalis*) which is already present in its fullness in man by nature. It is innate, as it were, a natural constituent of humanity. The man who is not *homo religiosus*, and hence *homo Islamicus*, is not a man. This is Allah's branding of His creation, namely, that He has endowed all men, as His creatures, with a *sensus numinus*, a *ḥanān*, with which to recognize Him as Allah (God), Transcendent Creator, Ultimate Master, and One. It is history which confirms this natural faculty with its primeval perceptions and intellections, cultivates and enriches it or warps it and diverts it from its natural goal.

Da'wah is the call of man to return to himself, to what is innate in him, to 'objective' or 'phenomenological' (i.e., with suspension of the indoctrinations and inculcations of history) re-examination of facts which are already given, and so in him. It is the nearest thing to Platonic anamnesis without the absurdity of reincarnation or transmigration of souls. As such, the claims of da'wah are necessarily moderate, nay humble! For the *dā'iyyah* is to do no more than the 'midwife', to stir the intellect of the *mad'ū* to rediscover what he already knows, the innate knowledge which God has implanted in him at birth.

As anamnesis, da'wah is based upon the Islamic assertion that primeval religion or monotheism is found in every man (*dīn al-ḥiṭrah*), and that all he needs is to be reminded of it. The function of the prophets is to remind people of what is already in them. Christianity has approached this position in the literature of the Apostolic Fathers and particularly in the Enlightenment. But it receded from this position in the nineteenth century because Western man was too deeply committed to his ethno-centrism to accept the universalism implied in that position. Let us remember that Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), the prince of the Enlightenment, held that 'to be black is an argument', and categorized the world's races in order of ascendancy with the Europeans on top. This was a failure of nerve on the part of Christendom.

G. *Da'wah is Ecumenical Par Excellence*

Islam's discovery of *dīn al-ḥiṭrah* and its vision of it as base of all historical religion is a breakthrough of tremendous importance in interreligious relations. For the first time it has become possible to hold adherents of all other religions as equal members of a universal religious brotherhood. All religious traditions are *de jure*, for they have all issued from and are based upon a common source, the religion of God which He has implanted equally in all men, upon *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*. The problem is to find out how far the religious traditions agree with *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*, the original and first religion; the problem is to trace the

historical development of religions and determine precisely how and when and where each has followed and fulfilled, or transcended and deviated from, *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*. Holy writ as well as all other religious texts must be examined in order to discover what change has befallen them, or been reflected in them, in history. Islam's breakthrough is thus the first call to scholarship in religion, to critical analysis of religious texts, of the claim of such texts to revelation status. It is the first call to the discipline of 'history of religions' because it was the first to assume that all religions had a history, that each religion has undergone a development.

Islam does not claim for itself, therefore, the status of a novelty, but of a fact and dispensation at least as old as creation. The religious life of man, with all its variety across the ages is rehabilitated under this view not as a series of vagaries, but as attempts at true religion. Monotheism is said to be as old as creation.

Islamic da'wah begins by reaffirming this ultimate base as genuine and true. It seeks to complete the critical task of sifting in the accumulated traditions the wheat from the chaff. We are not impressed by the claim of latter-day ecumenists, advocates of interreligious dialogue, toleration and co-existence, who assert the ultimacy of any religious system because it is religious. For such a claim is the absolutization of every religion's propositions, which is nothing short of cultural relativism. Indeed, such ecumenism is non-representative of the religions which claim that what they propose is *the* truth, and not merely *a* claim to the truth among many claims. And it is rationally inconsequential because it counsels the juxtaposition in consciousness of contrary claims to the truth without the demand for a solution of their contradiction. By avoiding all these pitfalls and shortcomings, Islamic da'wah is ecumenical, if ecumenicity is to have any meaning besides kitchen cooperation among the churches.

Da'wah is ecumenical *par excellence* because it regards any kind of intercourse between the Muslim and the non-Muslim as a domestic relationship between kin. The Muslim comes to the non-Muslim and says 'We are one; we are one family under Allah,

and Allah has given you the truth not only inside yourself but inside your religious tradition which is *de jure* because its source is in God.' The task of dialogue, or mission, is thus transformed into one of sifting the history of the religion in question. Da'wah thus becomes an ecumenical cooperative critique of the other religion rather than its invasion by a new truth.

II. Da'wah Content

Islam's view of other faiths flows from the essence of its religious experience. This essence is critically knowable. It is not the subject of 'paradox', nor of 'continuing revelation', nor the object of construction or reconstruction by Muslims. It is crystallized in the Qur'ān for all men to read. It is clearly comprehensible to the man of today as it was to that of Arabia of the Prophet's day (570–632 CE) because the categories of grammar, lexicography, syntax and redaction of the Qur'ānic text, and those of Arab consciousness embedded in the Arabic language, have not changed through the centuries. This phenomenon is indeed unique; for Arabic is the only language which remained the same for nearly two millennia, the last fourteen centuries of which being certainly due to the Qur'ān.¹ For Muslims, this essence has been on every lip and in every mind, every hour of every day.

The essence of Islam is tawhīd or the witnessing that there is no god but God. Brief as it is, this witness packs into itself four principles which constitute the whole essence and ultimate foundation of the religion.

Firstly, that there is no god but God means that reality is dual, consisting of a natural realm, the realm of creation, and a transcendent realm, the Creator. This principle distinguishes Islam from trinitarian Christianity where the dualism of Creator and creature is maintained but where it is combined with a divine immanentism in human nature in justification of the incarnation. *Tawhīd* requires that neither nature be apotheosized nor transcendent God be objectified, the two realities ever-remaining ontologically disparate.

Secondly, tawhīd means that God is related to what is not God as its God, that is, as its creator or ultimate cause, its master or ultimate end. Creator and creature, therefore, *tawhīd* asserts, are relevant to each other regardless of their ontological disparateness which is not affected by the relation. The transcendent Creator, being cause and final end of the natural creature, is the ultimate Master Whose will is the religious and moral imperative. The divine will is commandment and law, the 'ought' of all that is, knowable by the direct means of revelation, or the indirect means of rational and/or empirical analysis of what is. Without a knowable content, the divine will would not be normative or imperative, and hence would not be the final end of the natural; for if the transcendent Creator is not the final end of His own creature, creation must be not the purposive event consonant with divine nature but a meaningless happening to Him, a threat to His own ultimacy and transcendence.

Thirdly, tawhīd means that man is capable of action, that creation is malleable or capable of receiving man's action, and that human action on malleable nature, resulting in a transformed creation, is the purpose of religion. Contrary to the claims of other religions, nature is neither fallen or evil, nor a sort of *Untergang* of the absolute, nor is the absolute an apotheosis of it. Both are real, and both are good – the Creator being the *summum bonum* and the creature being intrinsically good and potentially better as it is transformed by human action into the pattern the Creator has willed for it. We have already seen that knowledge of the divine will is possible for man; and through revelation and science such knowledge is actual. The prerequisites of the transformation of creation into the likeness of the divine pattern are hence all, but for human resolve and execution, fulfilled and complete.

Fourthly, tawhīd means that man, alone among all the creatures, is capable of action as well as free to act or not to act. This freedom vests him with a distinguishing quality, namely responsibility. It casts upon his action its moral character; for the moral is precisely that which is done in freedom, i.e., done by an agent who is capable of doing, as well as of not doing it. This kind of action, moral

action, is the greater portion of the divine will. Being alone capable of it, man is a higher creature, endowed with the cosmic significance of that through whose agency alone is the higher part of the divine will to be actualized in space and time. Man's life on earth, therefore, is especially meaningful and cosmically significant. As Allah has put it in the Qur'ān, man is God's *khalifah*, or vicegerent on earth.¹ It is of the nature of moral action that its fulfilment be not equivalent to its non-fulfilment, that man's exercise of his freedom in actualizing the divine imperative be not without difference. Hence, another principle is necessary, whereby successful moral action would meet with happiness and its opposite with unhappiness. Otherwise it would be all one for man whether he acts, or does not act, morally. Indeed, this consideration makes judgement necessary, in which the total effect of one's lifetime activity is assessed and its contribution to the total value of the cosmos is acknowledged, imbalances in the individual's life are redressed and his achievement is distinguished from the non-achievement of others. This is what 'The Day of Judgement' and 'Paradise and Hell' are meant to express in religious language.

Fifthly, *tawhīd* means the commitment of man to enter into the nexus of nature and history, there to actualize the divine will. It understands that will as pro-world and pro-life and hence, it mobilizes all human energies in the service of culture and civilization. Indeed, it is of its essence to be a civilizing force. In consequence, Islamic da'wah is not based upon a condemnation of the world. It does not justify itself as a call to man to relieve himself from the predicament of existence which it regards as suffering and misery. Its urgency is not an assumed 'need for salvation' or for compassion and deliverance from anything. In this, as in the preceding aspects, Islamic da'wah differs from that of Christianity. Assuming all men necessarily to be 'fallen', to stand in the predicament of 'original sin', of 'alienation from God', of self-contradiction, self-centredness, or of 'falling short of the perfection of God', Christian mission seeks to ransom and save. Islam holds man to be not in need of any salvation. Instead of assuming him to be religiously and ethically fallen, Islamic

da'wah acclaims him as the *khalifah* of Allah, perfect in form, and endowed with all that is necessary to fulfil the divine will, indeed even loaded with the grace of revelation! 'Salvation' is hence not in the vocabulary of Islam. *Falāh*, or the positive achievement in space and time of the divine will, is the Islamic counterpart of Christian 'deliverance' and 'redemption'.

The Islamic da'wah does not, therefore, call man to a phantasmagoric second or other kingdom which is an alternative to this one, but to assume his natural birthright, his place as the maker of history, as the remoulder and refashioner of creation. Equally, his joys and pleasures are all his to enjoy, his life to live and his will to exercise, since the content of the divine will is not 'not-of-this-world' but 'of it'. World-denial and life-abnegation, asceticism and monasticism, isolationism and individualism, subjectivism and relativism are not virtues in Islam but *ḍalāl* (misguidance). Islam stands squarely within the Mesopotamian religious tradition where religion is civilization and civilization is religion.

Finally, *tawhīd* restores to man a dignity which some religions have denied by their representation of him as 'fallen', as existentially miserable. By calling him to exercise his God-given prerogatives, Islamic da'wah rehabilitates him and re-establishes his sanity, innocence and dignity. His moral vocation is the road to his *falāh*. Certainly the Muslim is called to a new theocentrism; but it is one in which man's cosmic dignity is applauded by Allah and His Angels. Christianity calls man to respond with faith to the salvific act of God and seeks to rehabilitate man by convincing him that it is he for whom God has shed His own blood. Man, it asserts, is certainly great because he is God's partner whom God would not allow to destroy himself. This is indeed greatness, but it is the greatness of a helpless puppet. Islam understands itself as man's assumption of his cosmic role as the one for whose sake creation was created. He is its innocent, perfect and moral master; and every part of it is *his* to have and to enjoy. He is called to obey, i.e., to fulfil the will of Allah. But this fulfilment is in and of space and time precisely because Allah is the source of space and time and the moral law.

Man, as Islam defines him, is not an object of salvation, but its subject. Through his agency alone the moral part, which is the higher part of the will of God, enters, and is fulfilled in, creation. In a sense, therefore, man is God's partner, but a partner worthy of God because he is trustworthy as His *khalifah*, not because he is pitifully helpless and needs to be 'saved'.

Notes

1. Controversies have arisen, as they certainly may, in the interpretation of the Qur'anic text. What is being affirmed here is the fact that the Qur'anic text is not bedevilled by a hermeneutical problem. Differences of interpretation are apodictically soluble in terms of the very same categories of understanding in force at the time of revelation of the text (611–32 CE), all of which have continued the same because of the freezing of the language and the daily intercourse of countless millions of people with it and with the text of the Qur'an.

2. *al-Baqarah* 2: 30; *al-An'am* 6: 165; *Yunus* 10: 14, 73; *al-Fatir* 35: 39; *al-A'raf* 7: 69, 74; *al-Naml* 27: 62.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Da'wah in the West: Promise and Trial

I. The Marvel of the Spread of Islam

Nobody who has observed the spread of Islam in the non-Muslim World, especially in the West, and still more especially in America, the United Kingdom and Western Europe during the last thirty years, can fail to wonder at the marvel, or to discern the hand of the Almighty (may He be Glorified and Exalted) at work. The configuration of so many diverse forces, arising in such disparate corners of the earth, determined by such varied chains of historical conditions, all focusing upon the aforesaid Western countries is too much for any kind of planning except the divine. The causes of Muslim immigration up to that time are themselves the result of a tremendously complex development within the Muslim World. But, had these causes been restricted to the Muslim World, the Muslims seeking to immigrate would never have arrived in the West. They were inextricably interwoven with the relations those Muslims had with the West (colonialism, studentship and training, tourism, visits to relatives, fortune-seeking), as well as dependent upon the West's rise as industrial and political world leader, relating itself to the Muslim World in a variety of ways.

On the other hand, the causes of the conversion of native

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Westerners to Islam have to do with the whole intellectual and spiritual development of the West, a development which in the last three or four decades seems to have prepared large segments of the population to be receptive to the Islamic message. The erosion of religious feeling, whether Christian or Jewish, the rise of the sciences of nature and technology under the aegis of a philosophy defiant of God and of everything supernatural; and the nihilism to which industry, urbanism and the whole structure of modern life had led all these seem like the unfolding of real salvation plans for a '*Heilsgeschichte*' aimed at the West. Another 'fullness of time' seems to be in full bloom before our eyes, awaiting only the disposition of Islam to bring it to fulfilment. That is exactly the sort of grand design which only the divine Designer can bring about.

Two main forces are jointly responsible for this marvellous spread of Islam in the West: the spiritual bankruptcy of the West and Muslim hijrah or emigration.

II. The Spiritual Bankruptcy of the West

A. *In the Realm of Knowledge of Man and Nature*

Exposure of Western minds to Islam and its living exemplars in Spain, Sicily and the lands invaded by the Crusaders, and then to Islamic ideas in the universities and libraries of the West, began a chain of events which broke the authority of the Church in the Reformation and liberated the mind from the dogmatism of Church doctrine. This was largely due to Islam's reconciliation of reason and revelation which made possible for the first time that questions of religion be looked into rationally; that they be subject to analysis and critique without offence to religious sentiment. This led to two significant results. It rehabilitated science and cut it loose from all the shackles the Church had imposed upon it. And it shook the foundation of the authority of the Church which bound salvation and grace to the total surrender of reason to faith. The progress of science in the investigation of nature, and of rationalism in the examination of

human life and destiny, culminated in the Enlightenment (the nearest that the West as a whole ever came to the world-view of Islam) and to the scientific and industrial revolutions which followed. America, being the offspring of Europe, is inconceivable without this European history which depended upon and received its first impetus from Islam.

In the nineteenth century, however, while the original gains made under the influence of Islam continued to develop and bring to the West significant fruits, countering forces emerged which challenged the Enlightenment principles. The West suffered a failure of nerve, retreated from its gains and lapsed into romanticism. The basic principle of romanticism is its mistrust of reason, and its vesting of feeling and personal experience with ultimate authority. The new emphasis upon experience made empiricism dogmatic, claiming not only that the truth of nature lies in empirical investigation, but that the empirical investigation which science conducts is the only method which leads to the truth. Human affairs and spiritual matters had better yield to the same kind of examination (the scientific) or remain devoid of truth. This enthusiasm for science and the scientific method yielded great results for the mastery of nature. The industrial revolution followed; and the West found itself strong enough with its own inventions to invade and colonize Asia and Africa. But it had a disastrous effect upon man's knowledge of man.

Romanticism dethroned reason and set up feeling in its place. It rejected the Enlightenment definition of man in terms of reason which he shared with all humans and which stood at the base of universalism. It sought a foundation for ethnocentrism and found it in feeling. Feeling is personal and ineffable, and provides its own justification. Upon it as experiential basis, the strongest ethnocentrism could be justified. Man was no more an instance of the universal man endowed with reason whose judgement must be the same, but the product of blood and soil, of past generations and a fund of experience we call history. Hence, his difference from other humans is not only *de jure*, but provides for his self-definition, and a yardstick for his conception

of good and evil. He is what he feels himself to be and is acknowledged by his fellows as sharing in their common fiduciary capital of feeling and experience. Thus the Asians and the Africans are not human, if the Europeans are so, because they do not share in this heritage of blood, soil and history which every country of Europe has. If industrial expansion has brought the Asians and Africans into contact with Europe, then certainly they may be subjected to serve the interest of their masters, the Europeans. For feeling does not only distinguish the European from the Asian or African; it also ranks the European higher and prior.

As a principle of knowledge and ethics, this European romanticism arrogated to itself the power to define the desired as that which the Europeans found desirable. This opened the gates of relativism and naturalism, and banished criticism in terms of the universally human. The national standard became the ultimate criterion for everything. For a while, nationalism predominated; and it continues to do so in varying degrees. Within it, however, a corrosive self-contradiction was at work which led eventually to nihilism. Being personal, feeling is not subject to any critique, not even in terms of one's feeling of yesterday, and much less in terms of other persons' feelings. The necessary conclusion is total absence of control, of criteria and checks upon the passing whimsy of the present. Soon, the meaningfulness of life itself disappears since no permanent and universal meaning for it can be established. Thus, the movement which began as liberation from the spiritual and worldly oppression of the Church, now turned against reason because the latter is by nature universalist. Its rebellion against reason put it in contradiction with itself and landed it in the opposition to any permanent value, or nihilism.

On the other hand, scientific progress and the mastery over nature it produced led to an unprecedented abuse of nature. It was really a rape of nature which produced nearly a century of drunken, ecstatic use of nature. The promise of usufruct to which nature's abject subjugation led seemed to know no bounds. However, immersion into a boundless usufruct of nature soon took its toll by adversely affecting the ecological balance of

nature. Acidic rain, air and water pollution, depletion of nature's resources, destruction of nature's powers of recovery, man's encroachment upon nature's reserves have indeed threatened nature's mechanisms of adjustment and restoration. Today, the certitude of the scientist stands shaken. At the apogee of his scientific progress, the scientist knows that he is exploring an infinite jungle in the dead of night with a pocket spotlight. Sound as the edifice of technology may be, the ultimate bases of scientific knowledge are shaky. How many mistakes by man's technology can the delicate teleological balance of nature, the design and the pattern of ends which Allah has implanted in it, absorb without a violent reaction which may snuff out man's life and silence his vain claims for good?

It is indeed strange that this whole pursuit of Western man has turned sour at its very moment of triumph. It has not yet occurred to him that nature is not his to subjugate or rape, but belongs to God; that it is only a gift which He granted to man to usufruct in accordance with His moral laws; that the teleology of nature and the teleology of man are necessarily interdependent. Western man's violation of the moral laws finally turned his usufruct of nature against him. A moral usufruct of nature would be costly because it has to be responsible to God, the Creator and Giver of nature to man as a gift, and to one's fellow-humans around the globe. It would imply careful undoing of every disorder caused by the usufruct. But the Western use of nature, whether capitalist, socialist or communist, is not subject to any moral laws. It is undisciplined, indeed licentious. Hence, the reaction of nature and the disfunctioning of its restorative powers to produce the elements necessary for the sustenance of life on earth.

B. *In the Realm of Religion*

To many people in the West, whom Allah blessed with a critical mind, or who accepted the truths of the Enlightenment, or of the Radical Reformation, and especially to Afro-Americans, the myths of Hellenized Christianity have never been accepted. The incarnation of God, the trinity, salvation as *fait accompli*, the

Kingdom of God as here and not-here, God's death and resurrection, vicarious guilt, suffering and merit, original sin and fallenness, the Church as body of God – all these have remained utterly opaque and incomprehensible. Subscription to these views hardly ever went beyond lip-service. This was the case of the Western man with the non-Western mind. His innocence, his simple common sense, his awareness of being imposed upon by the Western establishment, and, if he were Afro-American, his awareness of being pushed around from all directions by his slave-masters, his will to life and happiness; his sense of justice, were all contradicted and violated by a religion which seemed to deny them theoretically, while its adherents denied them in their enslavement of the Afro-American. Unlike the European, the Asian, the Africans or Amerindians of the West were fortunately devoid of any base in which to accommodate the myths of Christianity; nothing in their veins and muscles could welcome its values; and nothing in their experience could warrant their acceptance of its paradoxes. Asceticism and monkery, world and life-denial, individualism and personalism, ran against the grain.

Christianity's blessing and recommendation of poverty agreed with the slave-master's design to exploit the weak and the poor, whether Afro-American or white, and keep them in poverty. Its rejection of culture and emphasis on simple faith agreed with the design to keep them ignorant. Its denigration of the body, of the flesh and of the world agreed with that of keeping them in an abject condition. Finally, its doctrine of original sin implanted in them a complex of inferiority, impotence and submission; and its eschatology, a renunciation of any will to improve their conditions in this world. Their adherence to Christianity, whether Catholic or Protestant, was an ideal case for the Nietzschean analysis of 'slave-morality', for the Marxist theory of religion as 'opium', for Freud's projection of 'the end of an illusion'. Moreover, white racism made the Afro-American, the Amerindian or the Latin American, or 'Chicano' as the latter is derogatively called, a pariah in the land of his birth, even after his emancipation from slavery. He is a *de facto* second-class citizen, even when

his acculturation has reached a very high degree. His black or brown colour, as well as the ethnic complexion of all other Asians and Africans, and indeed, even of Mediterraneans, are regarded as pollutants always to be kept at a distance. Indeed, the gap between the races is widening, not contracting, despite the gains on the legal front. Official pronouncements on the part of government and public bodies run far ahead of implementation; and real gains may or may never follow upon them. For the most part, the Western ideal of equal opportunity remained empty without the prerequisites of equal preparation and equal disposition towards them by those of North European extraction. That is why those underprivileged Westerners turned their backs upon Christianity as time had proved its incapacity to deal with social problems. True, the modern library is full of books and essays which seek to present Christianity as a religion of social concern. Their logic is not convincing because none has dared to address itself to the world- and life-denial endemic to Christianity, or to the paradoxes at the core of its creed. And hardly any call to real universalism and equality has been heeded, whether in society or the Church itself. The sad result was that these attempts of the theologians hardly ever go beyond the classroom. Outside, in the high-rise office buildings where decisions are made, Christian concern is hardly ever a motive or factor whether in politics, education, government or business.

III. The Positive Appeal of Islam

Firstly, in contrast to the fallenness of man and creation, Islam teaches innocence. Man, it holds, is created innocent. Adam's disobedience was Adam's, not humanity's. Moreover, it was repented by Adam and forgiven by God. Man is placed on earth as God's vicegerent, for the purpose of fulfilling the Will of God and proving himself morally worthy in the process. Indeed, Islam teaches that God created man perfect, in the best of forms, and equipped him with all that is necessary for fulfilment of his *raison d'être*. Hence, man is responsible and God will reckon with him. This world is the only world. *Al-Ākhira*, or the other world, is

judgement and consummation of reward and punishment, not another world projected as alternative to this world. Nor is it postulated out of condemnation of this world and therefore plays a compensatory role for man's misery in it. Islam, therefore, finds the meaning of human life in man's cosmic function as the sole bridge through whose free action the higher part of God's will (namely, the moral) becomes fulfilled in history. Islamic humanism does not defy man. Nor does it make him the measure of all things. It regards him as the crown and ultimate purpose of creation, but under God Whose servant he is.

Secondly, Islam teaches that poverty is the promise of Satan; that the good things of life belong to the Muslim to enjoy; that Muslims ought to be healthy, clean, strong and productive. It holds men responsible for their own misery, and urges them to rise, to strike out in the wide world and seek God's bounty. It regards productive work, bringing welfare to oneself, one's dependents and neighbours, to mankind, as worship. Even the rituals of worship Islam regards as possessing dimensions of worldly welfare whose non-realization vitiates the rituals themselves. God's vicegerency on earth consists of *tamkīn fī al-ard* ('seizing the earth with strength'), *isti'mār* ('reconstruction of the earth') and the doing of good deeds for the sake of, and in obedience to, God. God has made the world beautiful: He ornamented the firmament and created beautiful and goodly objects for man to use and enjoy. He has made the whole creation subservient to man to the end of proving himself morally worthy. Islam teaches that the realization of the absolute in this world is indeed possible; that it is precisely man's obligation to pursue and actualize it. Hence, Islam impinges upon history and seeks to engineer it toward fulfilment of the divine patterns. For Islam, history is of crucial significance.

Thirdly, Islam teaches an ethic of action. In its purview, the personalist values of intention, good-will, purity are indeed values. But if the moral agent does not go beyond them, enter space and time, and there so interfere in the events as to deflect their courses towards the good, their value becomes very small. That is why Islam had to develop the law, to invest the ummah

with political, juristic, economic, administrative and social institutions and organs to implement it. The unity of God, Islam interprets as transcendence before which all humans are equal in creatureliness, and hence as equally subject to the law of God whether as agents or patients of moral action. That is why the ummah is necessarily universal, intended to cover humanity. Islam countenances no colour, no race, no chosen people complex, no nationalism, no relativism in anything that matters. Political action is viewed by Islam as the expression of its spirituality. Every individual, it holds, is a shepherd responsible for his circle; and the ummah is responsible for mankind. The highest standard is justice. The Muslim is obliged to realize it in his person, his family, his country, the world, or on the other side of the moon. Likewise, he is obliged to redress the balance of justice whenever and wherever it is upset by anyone, be he commoner or king.

Fourthly and finally, Islam teaches all the foregoing principles not as dogma, but critically, as the necessary conclusions of self-evident axioms and empirical facts. It does not impose them *ex cathedra*; but invites all and everyone to look into them personally with all the insight and experience at his disposal. It promises him, should he nonetheless arrive at a different conclusion, that he will neither be hereticated nor persecuted, but respected and honoured. Indeed, Islam invites him to continue the investigation, confident that eventually the truth will be discovered and understood; that it will prevail. Islam's criticality, and the intellectual and spiritual tolerance to which it leads, are not merely an act of courtesy and friendship on the part of kings or simple individuals which a different temper may negate, nor the result of a majority vote in a convention which differing political or social winds may revoke. They are the dictates of God which nobody has the right to change. They are laid out by the Divine Author in the Qur'ān for all to read and examine, enthralled as divine law by the Shari'ah courts in which any human anywhere may contend and receive justice without cost. And they are backed by the illustrious practice of millions of Muslims through 1400 years of history.

All this makes the appeal of Islam irresistible. It takes Islam to

be presented in candidness and truth for it to win the mind and heart of the conscientious Westerner. The candid presentation of Islam is by itself a disarming mechanism. Allah's cause wins with little or no effort. And yet, how failing have the Muslims been in fulfilling this most basic requirement of Islam!

The evil of social justice in North America and the West generally is sufficient to pull its victim away from the status quo and urge him to seek a change. If he happens to be a Westerner with a non-Western mind, the dominant ideology or religion which had never penetrated his mind has less attraction and less power to keep him from seeking change. By themselves, these considerations prepare for conversion to another faith. The inherent merits of Islam, its values, its capacity to correct the evils of racism, of injustice, and to inspire men to assume the burdens of self-salvation by their own effort, do the rest. Hence, Islam has spread through da'wah, the clear call of men and women to specific duties and rights presented as God's Commandments and perceived as sure solutions to the problems facing them.

As regards the ethnic minorities in the West, Islam confers upon them as victims of injustice, a new identity as well as a new dignity. It teaches them that their misery is not imposed by God, but by His enemies; that its removal is both possible and obligatory. And it promises them success here as well as in the Hereafter if they move to get rid of injustice. In fact, it teaches them that with Islam, they cannot lose. Islam convinces them that the world is theirs to usufruct and enjoy under God. It sobers them up with a feeling of responsibility, with the demand that their burden is world-wide in scope and comprehensive in coverage. Islam balances this universal responsibility with ummatic mutuality, reassuring every member that the whole ummah is responsible for him. Upon conversion to Islam, the forsaken, downtrodden victim of injustice, and the racially discriminated against ethnically different Westerner acquire as their own the world community of Islam with its billion souls.

IV. Muslim Hijrah or Emigration

A. *The New Muhājirīn (Émigrés)*

Muslims from the Near East and other parts of the Muslim World began to emigrate to the West in the last quarter of the previous century. Their purpose was similar to that of other immigrants; namely, escape from undesirable conditions in the old country and search for fortune in the new. Among the oldest immigrants who lived in groups and succeeded in preserving their identity, are the Muslim communities of Cedar Rapids (Iowa), Detroit (Michigan), Edmonton (Alberta) and London (Ontario), in North America; of London and Liverpool in the United Kingdom; of Paris, Marseilles, Rotterdam and Naples in Western Europe. Muslim communities established in England, France, Italy and the Netherlands a permanent presence of themselves as coming from countries suffering under the colonial yoke of these European states. The Balkans, where the Ottoman Empire was receding; Aden, which British rule had made an open roadstop to the ships of the world; and Syria-Lebanon, where political unrest and administrative instability were at their highest, were the other sources from which the immigrants to America and Western Europe came.

The period between the two world wars saw a large number of immigrants from every corner of the Muslim World to the imperial capitals and industrial towns of Europe. The same period witnessed considerable immigration to North America from Syria-Lebanon, the Balkans, South Russia, Caucasia and Turkey, where post-war conditions left much to be desired. Into Canada, there was an influx of Muslims from the British Commonwealth countries into which Muslims had first emigrated in pursuit of service with British forces. Very few Muslims came to study in America since domination of their homelands by Britain, France and Italy made it imperative for them to study in the colonizing countries.

It was after World War II that Muslim immigrants began to arrive in all Western countries in significant numbers. Indepen-

dence from colonialism and ascendancy of Western culture attracted Muslim students from everywhere. Their protracted stay and free mixture with fellow students and community, and the opportunities for study-cum-work programmes, paved the way for them to change status or to return as immigrants if conditions at home proved to be less than expected. The failure of national governments to provide opportunities for employment and/or advancement, to solve chronic problems whether economic or political; and their tyrannical police oppression provided further impetus to professionals and to the educated to emigrate. The desire to improve the quality of life and the promise of good fortune in the West certainly played an important role. More important, however, was the near total bankruptcy of Muslim political regimes. That bankruptcy was evident at the moral, spiritual, civilizational, educational, economic, social and political levels. It is not surprising that most post-independence regimes in the Muslim World were caricatures of Western models, whether democratic or dictatorial; that their social, political and economic ideals were caricatures of democracy, national integration and social justice. One and all, these regimes were proper instruments of neo-colonialism, whether deliberately or otherwise. Their essential disease was their separation from Islam, the only ideal capable of moving and inspiring the masses. Nationalism, Secularism, Democracy, Socialism and Communism are all impotent, and provide no 'cause' worthy of the Muslim's idealism. They are unable to command the loyalty of Muslims, and can furnish no internal energy to push the Muslim to self-exertion, or to hold him back in face of temptation. Such would have been provided by Islam and the *imān*-quality it develops and requires as base and criterion. But Islam was deliberately neglected – indeed combated – by the said regimes.

Awareness of this bankruptcy flashed in the minds of Muslims in consequence of the dissolution of the Syrian-Egyptian Union in 1961, the Pakistani-Indian War of 1965, the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, and the Cent Upheaval in Indonesia. The despair into which these débâcles plunged the Muslim World vented itself in massive emigration to North America and other Western

countries. In 1968, the Government of Egypt declared emigration legal and free. Hundreds of thousands of Muslim professionals and élite arrived in North America and Western Europe after these dates, constituting a real Muslim 'brain drain'. More recently, the upheaval in Iran sent several hundred thousand people into exile in the West.

Today, immigrant Muslims in North America number about three million. One fifth of them are here temporarily, as students and visitors; the remainder as permanent residents. In Europe, besides the Balkans, where some ten to fifteen million Muslims are native, about ten million have established themselves as permanent residents or guest-labourers. Most of the latter category have little or no skills and hence occupy the lowest echelons of the social hierarchy. Nonetheless, the majority are strongly committed to Islam. Their children, who are growing up as Europeans can, if they preserve their faith and wake up to its strength and potential, bring about a significant difference in the religious life of Europe.

B. *The Un-Islamic Émigré Mentality*

Muslim immigrants have come to America and other Western shores to study or to seek livelihood and opportunity for professional advancement. In most cases, they are beggars at the Western altar of knowledge; or receivers at those of Western affluence and economic development. This is not a foreigner's judgement; but the way Muslim immigrants see themselves. To see themselves in this light is typical of the mentality of immigrants.

The 'immigrant' mentality stands on two necessary assumptions; a country and culture *a quo* bankrupt, despised, hated, forsaken, left behind; and a country and culture *ad quem*, awesome, superior, admired and desired but not yet appropriated or mastered, distant and inappropriable. That is why the immigrant's mind remains 'immigrant' for at least one generation until the memory of the old country and culture has completely faded away and the new generation has little or no experiential

contact with it, whether directly or through their parents, if these have transplanted it into the new country and maintained it in ghetto-like isolation. That is also why the immigrant is necessarily a parasite to the country that adopts him, regardless of his productiveness. Whether such production is physical or professional, the immigrant's labour is an arithmetical addition to the country's production. His contribution merely increases what is already there, even if it consists of pure research in a laboratory or library. That he has fitted himself into it is the assumption of his employment, and the guarantee of his success. The immigrant's adjustment to his adoptive country and culture signifies this recognition of and acquiescence to the latter's superiority. The immigrant may be able to invent a new tool or machine, discover new facts, or originate a new way of doing things or solving problems. But as to ability to turn the country and its culture to a radically new orientation, and hence to the exploration of horizons genuinely new, the immigrant has none. *Ex hypothesi* he is devoid of other horizons, incapable of rising above the country and its culture to a vantage point from which to see other horizons. For, as immigrant, he is *of* the old country though presently not *from* the new country though not quite *of* it. The adoptive country accepts him with its hopes pinned on his children; or better, grandchildren. In himself, he is a liability; at best, mere material or instrument for its own predetermined march.

Is this what the Muslim *muhājirūn* are? Many of them indeed are precisely that. Their country needs not to bemoan their forsaking it; and their culture is not one iota the poorer because of their loss. On the other hand, North America or the West has no reason to celebrate their immigration. Their contribution – nay, existence within its boundaries – is but a matter of statistics. Western culture has no reason to rejoice at their joining its camp because, incapable of critical outlook of it as a totality – contribution to it by whatever creative talent they may possess is forever closed.

C. The Terrible Price of Emigration

1. *The 'Brain Drain'*. Viewed in themselves, those developments in the Muslim World which led to the emigration of Muslims from the homelands of their birth cannot be regarded except as a tragic disaster. Consider that doctor or engineer! How many Muslim babies have to be born, how many have to be nursed and sustained, how many have to be fed and protected while going to elementary and secondary school and college – and how many of these succeed through all these stages sufficiently to enter the professions? How many parents, guardians, governments and institutions have to spend in energy and care, and how much has the ummah to spend of its material resources to send one doctor or engineer to professional school or higher educational institution? In short, how many Muslims have to die – yes, do die! – that one Ph.D., M.D. or engineer may be produced? Such a final product of inestimable value is the Muslim immigrant whom the Muslim World presents to America or Europe on a silver platter – free, absolutely free of charge! The West itself would have had to spend the same amounts of everything, if not ten times more, to produce such a creature out of its own population. Now it is getting that person as a free gift. The whole Muslim World is pouring its 'human butter' into the jars of America and Europe, and it is doing so in the constant flow that is known as the 'brain drain'.

The 'brain drain' is the most distressing event in the modern history of the ummah. It is the clearest evidence of Muslim malaise all over the world, i.e., of the ummah's impotence to utilize and benefit from the talents, learning and achievement of its own sons; of its rejection of them because they have enlightened themselves and learned new truths. The educated are precisely those people who learned that an alternative to their country's oppression, misery, poverty, prejudice and injustice does exist outside its borders. Hence, they are forced to crush their sense of belonging to that country and emigrate. What a heinous crime on the part of government to declare its frontiers open for its own sons to cross in search of livelihood, freedom

and justice. The frontier of the Islamic state should see nothing but the reverse traffic. Being the concretization of justice, light and freedom as well as affluence, it should be the non-Muslim non-citizens who seek to enter it and live in it because it has instantiated the values of Islam. Nothing is uglier than moral bankruptcy but the acknowledgement of bankruptcy without doing anything to change it. Indeed, many repressive Muslim governments around the world rejoice that by permitting – nay, encouraging – emigration, they have gotten rid of a turbulent element in their societies.

The advocates of da'wah see in this massive emigration of 'brains' from the Muslim World to the Western, a God-sent blessing and boost for the international da'wah effort. There is no doubt that the 'brainy' *émigré* is the best recruit for da'wah work overseas, that he is a God-sent blessing to the host country; but only if he undergoes the identity crisis and transforms himself radically into a caller. From the standpoint of the ummah, however, he is a permanent and tragic loss. The gain to the one and the loss to the other are not equal. The loss is far greater. In this period of decay and weakness, when the ummah of Islam has fallen everywhere prey to the most sinister forces of neo-colonialism and ideological subversion, the ummah can ill afford to lose any of its talented sons. It desperately needs these sons and daughters to reform and reconstruct its institutions. If the best and strongest da'wah for Islam is the *uswah hasanah*, then the present state of the ummah is the worst anti-da'wah example. No society would collectively opt for Islam on the strength or merit which Muslim society anywhere presents today. It is to this task of reshaping the ummah that the talents of the Muslim youth ought to be directed. The *uswah hasanah* of a successful, truly Islamic society, would more than outweigh the advantages of the emigrant brains to the da'wah effort.

2. *The 'Untrained' Emigrant.* The same loss to the ummah occurs even if the emigrant had received little or no higher education. The fact that he has been restless in his society, entertaining ambitions for a brighter future, and possessed of

such spiritual force and *energie-vitale* to venture into the unknown in search of better fortune, is evidence of his being made of a different metal, of an all-too-precious, an all-too-scarce metal, the metal which is the spice and salt of humanity. For his promise and entrepreneurship, he is just as valuable as the learned. Nature produces his kind at the rate of one in a million. How many billions of geniuses have to combine and recombine to produce his kind? And yet he, too, is given free to the West when he emigrates. Naturally, the West tries its best first to exploit his 'cheap' labour by subjecting him to do the hardest work for the least wage, the work which the citizens would normally not do for those wages. Secondly, the kind of life which their meagre wage makes possible for them, considering their large families which they have to support in the old as well as the new countries, is one of bare subsistence in the slums of the industrial cities of the West. There, Western civilization at its nethermost grips them with its alcohol and drugs, its materialism and selfishness, its sexual promiscuity, crime and moral licence, ravaging their social stability and corroding their consciences. In these circumstances, the advocates of the Christian Church, rejected by their own Western élites, approach the Muslim *déraciné* with their missionary bait. Not that they are truly concerned about his miserable plight and seek to change it, but that they offer it to dampen and silence his rebelling conscience, to cause him to resign to his sad fate as that of a humanity waiting to be ransomed by a crucified god. The secular forces of Western society do the rest for his children. Television and the media, the 'ghetto' companions and 'ghetto' culture, the public school and its culture, succeed in de-Islamizing those children and separating them once and for all from their ummah, their old country, their tradition – in short, from Islam.

These millions of Muslim 'guest-workers', as they are contemptuously called by the Europeans, may for this generation provide their mother country with a fair amount of foreign exchange. But that is short-lived; for it is dependent upon the feeling of belonging and attachment of the emigrant to his ancestral home. This feeling does not get stronger but weakens as

time passes, and is nearly absent altogether in the young who grow up in the new country. On the other hand, the 'guest-workers' may prove beneficial to the da'wah effort by implanting themselves as an Islamic presence in the West, bound to multiply itself in the future. However, the ignorance, low social status and miserable conditions of Muslim workers can hardly be said to constitute an *uswah hasanah* worthy of emulation by the Western peoples. Moreover, the Western countries have been careful not to grant citizenship status to the 'guest-workers' or to their offspring; and to accept them on the clear condition that their country of origin would take them back should the Western host country decide to terminate their residence. These considerations make their value for the da'wah effort very questionable. The loss the ummah sustains in the brain-washing of themselves and of their children offsets the material gain from their earnings, and nihilates their value for da'wah.

D. *The Lost-Found Muhājirīn: The Afro-Americans*

If the origin of the Islamic presence in North America is still speculative, the settlement of African Muslims in North America in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries is certain. The fall of al-Andalus to European power was a cataclysm for millions of Muslims. It is indeed probable that some of them who had fallen captive to Spanish power might have constituted the first human cargoes shipped to America. It is equally probable that those who were unable to cope with the cataclysm might have volunteered to travel to the unknown. Of such events we have not heard of any record. Later on, as sugar plantations in the Caribbean Basin and the Southern United States demanded more and more hands to work them, the Spaniards, the Dutch, the French, the English and finally the Americans, began a systematic raiding of the coasts of Africa south of the Sahara to hunt and seize humans for sale in the slave markets of the New World. There can be little doubt that some of these unfortunates were Muslims; for we know that by 1600 a large proportion of the populations of Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia and Guinea were Muslims.

The climate of slavery was not one in which the Muslim *muhājir-malgré lui* could perpetuate his religion or culture. A different religious practice by the slave would have been regarded by the slave master as a threat, as defiance and insubordination. That is why the masters systematically eradicated the cultural and religious inheritance of their slaves and implanted their own in them. They gave the slaves their own names, forced them into their own faith, and rejoiced in seeing in them the reflection of themselves. Little did it matter whether the slave was replica or caricature. It was sufficient that his old identity was obliterated. As to the new identity, if he failed to realize it, the failure was, from the master's point of view, natural because the slave was an *Untermensch*. Unfortunately, nothing is known about these early Muslims in America. Perhaps, some of their practices might have survived in Afro-American traditions; or, having affected those traditions, they may still be deducible from them.

There have been conversions to Islam among these 'lost' *muhājirīn* from West Africa prior to the thirties, when Elijah Muhammad (1897-1975) launched his movement. Their numbers, however, were small; and their effect upon the Islamic presence in North America was scant. The first native American to bring significant change upon that presence was Elijah Muhammad. It was he who began in the thirties to call the Afro-Americans to abandon the identity imposed upon them as slaves and return to their original Muslim African identity. His call spread rapidly among them and assumed visible proportions in the big cities after World War II. The movement spread vigorously in the ghettos of American cities. The headquarters in Chicago became a beehive of administrators, public relations officers, business entrepreneurs and preachers. The appearance of Malcolm X (1925-65) on the scene, his rebellion against Elijah Muhammad following his conversion to Sunni Islam in Makkah, and his assassination - all these helped the Islamic movement to grow. The demise of Elijah Muhammad and the Sunni reforms of his son Warith al-Din Muhammad, have relaxed the discipline and done away with the paramilitary youth organization, 'Fruit

of Islam'. The vigour and enthusiasm are still the same, proportionate to the Muslims' capacities, and to the challenges. If anything, the movement is growing in numbers, in consciousness, in understanding of, and attachment to, the genuine ideals of Islam.

Although no adequate statistics are available, native American Muslims number about two million. One and a half million belong to the World Community of Islam in the West (recently renamed 'The American Muslim Mission'). About half a million Afro-Americans are Muslims and belong to various other organizations, mostly Sunni. About 5000 white native Americans have joined the ranks of Islam.

The Afro-Americans who responded favourably to Elijah Muhammad's call did not do so out of their once-upon-a-time attachment to Muslim African identity. The memory of that identity had been blotted out of their minds by the passing centuries. The motivation for their re-entry into Islam came directly from the appeal of Islam, and from the malaise of their social, cultural and spiritual existence. The latter was the corresponding subjective factor; the ideals of Islam, the external objective stimulus. It is in the analysis of these factors that an understanding of their movement can be reached. The same factors were also operative in other Afro-Americans, as well as in white Americans who were introduced to Islam by Muslim students, immigrants or visitors.

V. The *Muhājir* as Instrument of Da'wah

A. The *Muhājir's* Awakening Through Fire

Allah has His own designs. Even the most adverse conditions could be used by Him to further His cause. He has committed Himself to give it victory over its enemies. Certainly, the estrangement of the *muhājir* on the emotional, cultural, social and religious fronts and his suffering of separation from home and kin, are the worst degradation, the greatest hardship to which he could be subjected. Without a doubt, the Hijrah is the hardest

fate to befall anyone. Its devastation is neither bodily nor economic, but psychic. Yet in its darkest hour of tribulation and anguish, Allah injects the Light of Islam which fills the *muhājir* with optimism, confidence and strength. The *muhājir* may have come as an immigrant in search of Western knowledge, professional advancement, or well-being. However, in the process, he undergoes an 'identity crisis', a shattering of his self image due to the radical changes his immigrant status in the alien world has brought upon him. Is he the same person he has become? Did he betray his religion, culture, legacy, country and family tradition? What would he say were he to meet again his parents and ancestors? In his agonizing travail over such questions, the Muslim *muhājir* to the West can follow either one of two, and only two, courses: He can wipe out from his consciousness all memory of the old country, and plunge deeper into the already radical change he has undertaken. Although this is extremely difficult to perform and may cause him to lead a life constantly tormented by his conscience, there are those who succeed in following it. Or, he may awaken to a fuller recognition of Islam, of his religion and cultural tradition. The Vision of Islam is then recaptured, this time with all its glow and brilliance. It is a new birth, a genuine transfiguration after immersion in tragedy. The Vision of Islam is again 'in' his eyes, to see and to nourish with all the benefits of his new-world knowledge and experience. It is immaterial that his awakening has come late in life, or that it has come only at the challenge of the new culture. It takes a rubbing stone to prove the gold present in a piece of ore; but that does not change its golden nature, nor its golden capacity to shine forth with proper prophylaxis. Once the Islamic Vision is recaptured, a radically new outlook on one's life, one's Hijrah, on the new world and one's role in it, is obtained. A new life, with a genuinely new sun, or centre of light, is now open to him which releases energies in him hitherto unknown and propels him into the thick of the West, there to transform it and transfigure it as he himself has been transformed and transfigured. He has become a 'person with a cause'. How does Islamic consciousness achieve this?

First, the new Islamic Vision removes all consciousness of guilt which the *muhājir* may have felt at having emigrated and, as it were, forsaken the country of his birth. By making him personally responsible for the unfavourable temporal circumstances which led to his decision to emigrate, and blaming him if he suffered their continuation sitting idly by, Allah incited him to take his fate into his own hands and alter it radically by emigration, if the road to a radical transformation of his country and its circumstances was blocked (Qur'ān, *al-Nisā'* 4: 97-8). The bitter evil which has tortured him in the past now becomes good by virtue of its subservience to a higher value. The tragically-laden experience of emigration is now perceived as an instrument, a link in a chain of divinely-ordained events, leading to the new transformation or *hidāyah*.

Second, the Islamic Vision removes all consciousness of guilt which the *muhājir* feels at his success in the new station. Many successful *muhājirūn* are overwhelmed by feelings of gratitude to their adoptive country, which they seek to gratify by extraordinary acts of charity and thanksgiving. Noble as this sentiment may be, it hides behind it a guilt complex which is appeased by the said acts of generous giving. Far more serious is the realization, implied in such guilt-feeling, of the absolute goodness and superiority of the new station in the person's total experience. The Islamic Vision wipes out this feeling (and its undesirable implication as well) by convincing the *muhājir* that the success is not his, but God's; that it is God Who so oriented and manipulated his life and his new circumstances as to bring about success. Being God's grant to him, his success is innocent and free, perfect *ḥalāl* which he may appropriate, possess and enjoy in good conscience (Qur'ān, *al-Faṭḥ* 48: 18-20). Indeed, the Islamic Vision opens the *muhājir's* mind to a new vista of opportunities for greater success by its teaching that the whole world is the Muslim's to develop and usufruct in fulfilment not only of his basic needs, but also of his need for comfort, pleasure, joy and even luxury (Qur'ān, *al-Mulk* 67: 15; *al-Anfāl* 8: 26).

Third, the Islamic Vision lays before the eyes of the immigrant a new challenge and a new promise, by imposing upon him the

duty to call all non-Muslims to Islam, and reminding him that in his word as well as in his deed, he is obliged to be the witness of God on earth, His vicegerent who establishes the institutions of Islam and makes God's word and judgement supreme. In North America, and the West generally, there is so much atheism, so much abnegation of religious truth, so much rejection of the most fundamental tenets of Judaism and Christianity, so much scepticism, as to arouse and shake the least sensitive religious conscience. The person endowed with the Vision of Islam cannot witness the scene with indifference. Sooner or later, he must come to the realization that his Hijrah from his land of birth, permitted and arranged by God and made by Him successful through re-establishment in the new land, were links in a nexus of purposes leading to his new assignment as 'caller to God'. His is a new task whose fulfilment awaits him as a new glory, a completion of his faith, a discharge of the most sacred duty, a testament unto history. Hasn't God sent him to his new 'Madinah' that he may freely call the people to the truth? That he may, by his eloquence, his *uswah ḥasanah* or good example, and by his 'greater jihād' convince mankind of the truth that God is God, Ultimate Cause and Ultimate End, Sole Creator and Master, Whose Commandments are before all humans to be obeyed.

Fourth, the Islam Vision provides the *muhājir* with the criterion with which to understand, judge and seek to transform the unfortunate realities of North America and the West. Here are whole continents lending themselves to alcohol and drugs, to sexual promiscuity and exploitation, to family destruction and individualism, to cynicism and pessimism, to racism and discrimination, to the pursuit of Mammon at the cost of morals and justice, to the rape of Mother Nature, to political and economic imperialism against the rest of humanity. Certainly, these continents are groaning with pain, and crying out for help which only the person with the Vision of Islam can give. For such a one is the only person professing as well as living a categorical No! to all these evils at once, the only one whose 'No' is backed up by the strongest arguments, the most

First, the new Islamic Vision removes all consciousness of guilt which the *muhājir* may have felt at having emigrated and, as it were, forsaken the country of his birth. By making him personally responsible for the unfavourable temporal circumstances which led to his decision to emigrate, and blaming him if he suffered their continuation sitting idly by, Allah incited him to take his fate into his own hands and alter it radically by emigration, if the road to a radical transformation of his country and its circumstances was blocked (Qur'ān, *al-Nisā'* 4: 97-8). The bitter evil which has tortured him in the past now becomes good by virtue of its subservience to a higher value. The tragically-laden experience of emigration is now perceived as an instrument, a link in a chain of divinely-ordained events, leading to the new transformation or *hidāyah*.

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persuasive evidence, the longest history, and the greatest achievement of success at implementation.

Fifth, the Islamic Vision provides the *muhājir* with the deepest love, attachment and aspiration for a 'North America' or 'West' reformed and returned to God, to carry forth His Message and Law unto mankind, in this and all other spaces. Nothing would be greater than these youthful, vigorous and resourceful peoples of the West turning away from their past evil and marching forward under the banner of *Allāhu Akbar!* And none could be more motivated to bring this about, to serve this noble cause with all his energies and to lay down his life for it, than the person with the Vision of Islam. Above all, the Islamic Vision provides the orientation necessary for the health and sanity of the West, namely, the subjection of the life of its peoples to the moral law; of their corporate and political conduct to peace and justice, to international assistance and cooperation with the victims of injustice and poverty everywhere. The Islamic Vision enables the West to increase its mastery and usufruct of nature, but disciplines it with responsibility to God for nature – His gift, and to the generations of the future – the other creatures of God who are no less our equals. The Islamic Vision endows the West with a new destiny worthy of it. For this renovation of itself, of its spirit, for its rediscovery of a God-given mission and self-dedication to its pursuit, the West cannot but be grateful to the *muhājir* with Islamic Vision. It cannot but interpret his advent on its shores except as a God-sent gift, a timely divine favour and mercy. It will not fail to recognize in the person with Islamic Vision a true son, though born overseas, whose spirit is nearly identical with that of the early founders of the New World, who ran away from oppression and tyranny seeking a haven where they would remould their lives under God, seek His Bounty and raise high His banner.

Sixth, the Islamic Vision provides the *muhājir*, as well as the native convert, with a sense of mission. A new calling stirs them from their complacency and spiritual lethargy. Their life is infused with a new meaning, a new significance whose dimensions are cosmic. In short, whereas before the Vision of Islam has taken

possession of them, they were *matériel* and an instrument for processes of history which they did not understand, let alone control, now they are subjects of these processes, orienting them towards greater goals. They are people with a cause, with the noblest cause! As such, they are entitled to respect above all by their own selves, and certainly by their hosts whom they can now define better than the latter can, and whose goals in history and ultimate destiny they can better articulate.

B. *Da'wah: The Only Justification for Hijrah*

Whether temporary or permanent resident, highly educated or merely enterprising immigrant or native, black or white, the Muslim in America and Western Europe has but one justification – Islam! Without it, he is the most despicable of all. His material success avails him nothing in this regard. But how does Islam justify him?

1. *The Temporary Student.* No Muslim has the right to come to America or to Europe as a student unless he regards himself as the last member of his species, and successfully completes all the duties incumbent upon him under this vision. As a last member of his species – i.e., as the last student to be sent by the Muslim World to the West – Islam prescribes for him to learn all and everything there is to learn in his field, to surpass his non-Muslim teacher, to the end of making available to the ummah all that human knowledge has so far achieved. Furthermore, Islam prescribes for him to return to the Muslim World and there to teach all that he has learned to as many Muslims as the ummah requires to satisfy the ummah's needs of that branch of knowledge. In this way, the ummah's need to send another Muslim to learn the same knowledge would be obviated, and the student in question has fulfilled the vision of his being the last member of his own species. His expatriation was a one-shot operation. No Muslim student would be justified in coming to the West for a partial fulfilment to be repeated by successive generations of Muslims without implying that the Muslims are incapable or

unworthy of that knowledge. If the student is personally incapable of achieving this goal, then the expense the ummah incurs in sending him is futile and a more capable candidate should have been sent in his place. Allah will not bless a people who entrust commissions to people not prepared to carry them out. Moreover, the Muslim student in the West who is not in fact the last member of his species is devoid of shame, devoid of genius and devoid of spirit. How can he stand the thought that under Peter the Great (1672–1725), Russia sent her sons to study in Western Europe but they proved to be the last of their species, so that after the Red Revolution, no more students were sent and all the learning of Western Europe became Russia's? The same is true of Japan whose sons have surpassed the West in their science, technology and productivity. And the same phenomenon repeated itself before our eyes in contemporary China. Why may the Muslims not do likewise? Since Muhammad 'Ali (1769–1849), Egypt has sent generation after generation of students to study in Western institutions – without shame! Worse yet, and tragically so, is the fact that the educational standards of Egypt are of the lowest in the world, deteriorating far below the days when Egypt was a British colony. Why? Because, simply, the student and the teacher are both devoid of *imān*, devoid of that Islamic determination to seek knowledge for Allah's sake – and hence, perfectly, absolutely and completely.

Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) concluded his advice to the learning youth with the following universal truth: 'We sought knowledge for a purpose other than God's. But knowledge itself refused to be so sought.' There would, therefore, be no wonder that the wisdom sought for other purposes than God's (money, prestige, egotistic advantage) refuses to be so sought and fools its pursuer. Today, as far as educational policy is concerned, the crown of un-Islamicity is worn not by Egypt, but by the oil-rich countries who send their sons to the West by the score and at the most tender age, without the least notion of, not to speak of commitment to, Islam's ideals. The casualty rate among them should be, not only the number of people who do not graduate, but also all those who suffer brain-washing during their

expatriation, become Westernized and forsake the values of Islam. Moreover, the countless millions they spend on their students in the West could well finance the most sophisticated universities, libraries and laboratories in their own Muslim lands, if only their leaders had the vision for developing such institutions. Instead of seeking out the brains and talents wherever in the Muslim World they may be, the oil-rich countries fill the responsible positions with their own nationals even if they have [limited capabilities]. No wonder then that their universities have the lowest standards, despite their astronomical budgets. They are doomed always to depend upon the West for education. The greatest part of their funds are spent on grandiose building projects, on oversize inefficient bureaucracies, and temporary hospitality for an excessive number of 'expert' guests, while their professors have neither offices to house their books, tutor their students, nor conduct research. They suffer from meagre salaries, and find no encouragement for their safeguarding of the academic standards of their students. Anxious to show their superiors quick, quantitative results, the administrators want everybody to graduate and receive a diploma. University libraries are unable to provide the research services. Libya's much-proclaimed and tempting *Madinat al-'Ilm* project, for example, and the University of Riyadh's *Al-Majlis al-'Ilmī* have not yet achieved anything worth mentioning, eight years after their foundation.

2. *The Permanent Resident.* As immigrant to the West, whether highly trained or merely enterprising, the Muslim has no right to continue his Hijrah. He is *murtaziq*, a mercenary, who has forsaken the ummah in pursuit of an egotistic advantage. His *rizq* (material benefit) is nothing but the crumbs which fall from the Western table and which he devours without shame. For he gives nothing in return. He only receives. The professional or entrepreneurial service he renders to America or the West is only a quantitative increase of their wealth, a mere addition. It is of no significance to the West as such, which can do without it just as well. Though some humans are born beggars, the position

of such Muslims is intolerable. The Qur'anic permission to emigrate and strike out in the world seeking better fortune (*al-Nisā'* 4: 96) does not apply to them. For, although they are indeed hard-pressed at home and need to change their living circumstances, they forfeit that right by giving it priority over Islam. The Muslim is not free to undertake the Hijrah if it constitutes a net loss to the ummah. There must be some other activity or consideration coupled with the Hijrah to make it beneficial to the ummah, along with its benefit to the *muhājir*. The Muslim emigrant in America or Europe who is only and purely a *murtaziq* runs the double risk of abnegating his religious duties and of his children growing up as non-Muslims. These risks are near certainties when, as the hypothesis indicates, the person's Hijrah is solely and purely for mercenary reasons. It is otherwise with the *muhājir* who may have undertaken his Hijrah for similar reasons but who has awakened to Islam through the fire of shock, alienation and self-contempt, or who has undertaken his Hijrah for Islamic reasons, which is rare. Such a person is a *dā'iyyah* to Allah, a caller of men to God, to His cause of truth and justice, of virtue and beauty.

Certainly, such awakening or motivation, whether pre- or post-migration, justifies the *muhājir* and ennoble his Hijrah. The *rizq* which befalls to him as a result of his emigration is innocent and may be a reward Allah has conferred upon him. Such a person loses no opportunity to call his fellow humans to God, His life as an individual, father, spouse, or friend is lived as an exemplification of his spiritual calling. It is one of the instruments he uses in his call, along with logic and reason, the instantiations of values in his life or that of others, to energize and move the hearts and minds of the called. For once he becomes Islamically aware, it is necessary for him to relate himself to his un-Islamic surroundings by active Islamization or da'wah. Da'wah, the Call to Islam, is inherent in Islamic consciousness. The consciousness determined by Islam cannot but seek to increase in piety and service the humans with whom it comes into contact where these, also, are already determined by Islam. When those humans are not Muslim, the obligation to bring Islam to them is *a fortiori*.

Da'wah to non-Muslims becomes under the Islamic Vision an absolute necessity. Awareness of God is awareness of ultimate reality and knowledge of His Will is knowledge of the *summum bonum*. The good or value is moving and demands to be actualized. It is a self-contradiction to claim to know the good and to be unconcerned about its actualization. The Muslim *dā'iyyah* is, therefore, acting under a necessity that is rational.

Equally, da'wah is the noblest charity of which the Muslim is capable. Allah has assigned to it the highest order of rank among the ethical virtues. He said: 'And who is nobler of speech than he who called (men) to God, who does the good deeds and affirms this as his Islamic action?' (Qur'an, *Fussilat* 41: 33). Having found the ultimate good, what is nobler than being willing to share it with one's fellow men? To argue that da'wah is an invasion of one's fellows' lives which belong exclusively to them is sheer insensitivity to their fate; and, in fact, it can proceed from a person who has never been touched by the good. The person who has cannot, without compromising his very experience, stop himself from making his experience known to others. For it is equally axiomatic that value is to be realized, and that the realization of value in space and time is also a value.

VI. Da'wah and World Order

There have been empires before the Hijrah; and many emperors sought to bring the world under their dominion. The pre-Hijrah empire-builders had an idea of world order which brought mankind and the four corners of the world under the sway of one power system. They may also have thought of converting mankind to one religion – their own. The process by which the world empire was to be built was conquest; and religious conversion was then to proceed by force and intolerance. The concept of world order in which various human groups are constituent members was not born. Nor was the idea known that there could exist a law to govern relations between human groups. Pre-Hijrah history has known numerous cases of one group imposing its law upon other groups as it imposed its

gods, customs and power. The scions of the West point proudly to the seventeenth-century Dutch thinker Grotius (1583–1645) who laid down the humblest beginnings of Western international law. Their pride blinds them to the fact that 'their' Grotius was inspired by the same seventeenth-century Rationalism – the forerunner of the Enlightenment – which benefited deeply from the epistemology of Islam. And they are utterly ignorant that the Hijrah had created in 622 CE the first world order and based it upon an immutable law, beyond the tampering of all emperors and power seekers.

The Islamic state which the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him) founded at the Hijrah was not only a state, but a world order. The political systems which the world had known until then were known to him. The Empire model was embodied in Byzantium and Persia; and the tribal model throughout Arabia. Beyond them, seafarers and travellers must have brought accounts of other states living in isolation from the rest of the world. The Prophet sought a new definition of man and citizen that neither the empire nor tribal model presented. To define man by reference to the political power structure under which he lives, or to the tribe into which he is born, or to the land in which he and his parents grew up, is to insult and to degrade him. Far more becoming and dignified for a human is to be identified through the religion or ideology he keeps. Rulers, blood relations, skin colour and property all have their relevance, but that relevance should never figure in the human's definition. Man is greater than any or all of these elements. It is his vision of reality, his philosophy of life, his perception of the world and history that ought to define and identify him.

First, the Covenant of Madinah founded the Islamic community as a multi-tribal, multi-racial society of free individuals who deliberately decided to join it as an organization for mutual help, social order and cooperative pursuit for the benefit of all.

Second, the same Covenant founded the Islamic state as consisting of a Muslim community and a Jewish community, each of which is autonomous as regards its internal affairs, free to order

the lives of its members according to its own religious, social and political tradition. It bound both communities to the Islamic state whose security they must honour in return for the Islamic state's guaranteeing of the community's security against its enemies. Because the overarching state is Islamic, the non-Muslim community members are not obliged to serve in its forces or wage its wars, but are exempt. Should any one of them desire to do so his services cannot be rejected and he must be refunded the *jizyah* tax he paid for the security of the community guaranteed by the state. This does not mean that the non-Muslim community is not to be called to Islam. But it does mean that, should its members reject the option of Islam, their decision must be honoured and respected by the Islamic state and the Muslim community. Undoubtedly, the Prophet called the Jews of Madinah to Islam before and on the day of the Hijrah. Those who accepted the call became *ipso facto* equal members of the Muslim community. Those who rejected the call – and they were the majority – were constituted by him into a community constitutive of the Islamic state, and free to live as Jews, to enforce the Torah – their law, and to perpetuate their culture under the protection of the Islamic state. This was a tremendous step forward for them; for they existed in Arabia only as clients of Arab tribes, and hence as second-class citizens. Overnight, they became as Jews full citizens of the Islamic state.

Third, the Covenant of Madinah founded a new world order. This was not a mere treaty or convention between states, nations or tribes; but a super-state, with a head, a government, an army, a permanent law and polity. Indeed, that was the Islamic state, functioning as the instrument of world order. At birth on the first day of the Hijrah, it had two constituents: The Muslim ummah and the Jewish ummah. Eight years later, it added a third constituent, the Christian ummah composed of the Christians of Najrān. That same year, according to some reports, it welcomed a fourth ummah, the Sabaeen Persians. Following the conquests of Persia, India and Central Asia, the Hindu and Buddhist communities were admitted as separate ummahs enjoying the same privileges of membership as the original Muslim and

Jewish members. Obviously, the Islamic state was conceived to be the world state entrusted with the task of establishing world peace and maintaining universal order. Islam furnished the law under which world peace and an order of freedom and justice were to be maintained. Though furnished by Islam, this law of nations is not the law of the Muslim community imposed on everyone, but the rational mechanism for an international order of peace, equality and justice. Unlike modern international law, which recognizes only sovereign states and is impotent to enforce itself, Islamic international law recognizes sovereign states as well as human groups and individuals. Anybody can be a plaintiff or a defendant under it, and justice is without cost so that everyone has access to it.

The world order Islam envisages is one in which humans, wealth and ideas move freely everywhere, in peace. Life, property, and the power to decide one's own identity and one's own fate, are sacred, inviolable rights of all. And everybody may choose the ummah to which he belongs, the place of his residence and the work he wishes to do. By virtue of his humanity, everybody may contend in the matter of truth; everybody may join the argument, may convince and be convinced by others as to the truth and value of life and reality. As long as this right is exercised in peace, with decorum and mutual respect, and the exercise is absolutely free of immorality, it is universal and no power may interfere in its course. But if the exercise is immoral – i.e., if it involves bribes or threats of any kind, if any element other than the purely ideational is permitted to influence the deciding process of the mind, it becomes vitiated. In that case, it may and should be stopped by the authority responsible for defending society against subversion. No nation has the right to isolate itself from the rest of humanity; and if it did, it would violate international order and law and expose itself to forceful action by the world state. To build around any group of humans an iron curtain and to isolate it from mankind is an offence against humanity.

To celebrate the Hijrah today is indeed to make it alive for the present, to *vergegenwärtigung* it. Nothing could be more

needed, more appropriate and more salutary to this whole world of ours – sick by any standard because of inter-nation competition for the rape of nature and subjugation of mankind – than the world order the Prophet Muḥammad founded fourteen centuries ago. Indeed, *Iḡāmat al-Hijrah* today would mean nothing unless the Muslim possessed with the Vision of Islam began in earnest to call his fellow Muslims first, and mankind second, to join the ranks of those who seek a new world order of peace and justice, of piety and virtue.

Allah commands action by argument and by example. May we all prove worthy of His revelation!

Glossary

<i>‘Abadah:</i>	To worship.
<i>‘Abadan:</i>	For eternity, forever.
<i>al-‘Ākhirah:</i>	Hereafter.
<i>Allāhu Akbar:</i>	God is the Greatest.
<i>Anṣār:</i>	Helpers.
<i>al-‘Arab al-‘Āribah:</i>	Indigenous Arabs.
<i>al-‘Arab al-Musta‘ribah:</i>	Arabized Arabs.
<i>Badī‘:</i>	The science of metaphor and good style.
<i>Badw:</i>	Bedouins.
<i>Balāghah:</i>	Eloquence, proclamation.
<i>Bilā kayfa:</i>	Without ‘how’, without qualification.
<i>Ḍalāl:</i>	Misguidance.
<i>Dār al-Ḥarb:</i>	The House of War.
<i>Dār al-Islām:</i>	The House of Islam.
<i>Dār al-Salām:</i>	The House of Peace.
<i>Dā‘iyah:</i>	A caller to Islam, preacher.
<i>Da‘wah:</i>	Invitation (to Islam).
<i>Dhimmī/Dhimmah:</i>	A non-Muslim under the protection of an Islamic State.
<i>Dīn al-ḥiṭrah:</i>	Natural religion or way of life.

<i>Falāh:</i>	Success.	<i>Khilāfah:</i>	Caliphate.
<i>Fiqh:</i>	Jurisprudence.	<i>Mad'ū:</i>	The invited, the person called for Islam.
<i>Fiṭrah:</i>	Nature.	<i>Makrūhāt</i> (sing. <i>Makrūh</i>):	Disapproved or blameworthy things.
<i>Ḥadīth</i> (pl. <i>Aḥādīth</i>):	Tradition, relating to deeds, approval, and utterances of the Prophet Muḥammad and his Companions.	<i>Mandūbāt:</i>	Praiseworthy actions.
<i>Ḥalāl:</i>	Permitted, lawful.	<i>Milal:</i>	Communities, sects.
<i>Ḥanīf:</i>	One who is inclined to One God.	<i>'Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal':</i>	Religious sects and creeds.
<i>Ḥarām:</i>	Prohibited, unlawful.	<i>Millah</i> (Arabic):	Community.
<i>Ḥasanāt:</i>	Good deeds.	<i>Millet</i> (Turkish):	As in <i>Millah</i> .
<i>Hidāyah:</i>	Guidance.	<i>Muḥaddīth:</i>	Teacher or compiler of <i>aḥādīth</i> .
<i>Ḥikmah:</i>	Wisdom.	<i>Muhājir</i> (pl. <i>Muhājirūn</i>):	One who emigrates, émigré.
<i>Hijrah:</i>	Migration, associated with the Prophet Muḥammad's migration from Makkah to Madinah and beginning of the Islamic calendar.	<i>Muḥarramāt:</i>	Prohibited things.
<i>Hijrī:</i>	The Islamic calendar.	<i>Mukallaf:</i>	Legally responsible person.
<i>Ḥunafā':</i>	Believers in One God.	<i>Murtaziq:</i>	Mercenary.
<i>I'jāz:</i>	Inimitability.	<i>Mushā'arah</i> (Urdu):	Recitation of poems by the poets in a gathering.
<i>Īmān:</i>	Faith.	<i>Mushabbihah:</i>	Anthropomorphist.
<i>Iqāmat al-Hijrah:</i>	To re-enact Hijrah.	<i>Mushrikūn</i> (sing. <i>Mushrik</i>):	Polytheist.
<i>Isti'mār:</i>	Colonialism.	<i>Muslimūn</i> (sing. Muslim):	Follower of Islamic religion.
<i>Jahannam:</i>	Hell.	<i>Ramaḍān:</i>	Ninth month of the Hijrī Calendar, and the month of fasting.
<i>Jihād:</i>	Effort or struggle.	<i>Rizq:</i>	Provisions, sustenance.
<i>Jinn:</i>	Invisible creatures.	<i>Ṣabr:</i>	Patience.
<i>Jizyah:</i>	Poll tax.	<i>Ṣalāt:</i>	Prayer.
<i>Khalīfah</i> (pl. <i>Khulafā'</i>):	Caliph.	<i>Shahādah:</i>	Witness, declaration of faith.

Sharī'ah:	Sacred law.
Shirk:	Polytheism, attributing partners to God.
Shūrā:	Consultation, consultative body.
Sunnah (pl. <i>Sunan</i>):	Traditions and practices of the Prophet Muḥammad.
Sūrah:	Chapter of the Holy Qur'ān.
Ta'aqqul:	Discernment, prudence.
Tafsīr:	Exegesis, a commentary of the Holy Qur'ān.
Tamkīn fī al-arḍ:	Getting power on earth.
Tashbīh:	Anthropomorphism.
Ta'ṭīl:	Denial of God's attributes.
Tawḥīd:	Oneness of God.
'Ulamā':	Religious scholars.
Ummah:	Universal Muslim Community.
'Umrah:	Lesser pilgrimage.
Uswah ḥasanah:	Excellent example of the Prophet Muḥammad.
Wājibāt:	Obligations.
Wujūh al-i'jāz:	Aspects of inimitability.
Yaqīn:	Certainty.
Zakāt:	Poor due.

[CE indicates 'Common Era', AH indicates 'After Hijrah' and honorific titles, for God, the Prophet Muḥammad and the Prophet's Companions, are stated in the first instance in each chapter.]

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